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DISCUSSION:

JOAN SIMON

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DISENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE

THE BY-ELECTIONS AND LABOUR PARTY
POLICY

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Disengagement in Europe

R. Palme Dutt

THE question of disengagement in Europe is now in the forefront of international politics. It is recognised on all sides that the present confrontation of two armed camps in Europe facing one another across the artificial dividing line is full of potential danger which could at any moment give rise to an explosion and to general war. If this already dangerous situation were further intensified by the development of nuclear armaments on both sides of the dividing line, it is obvious that the menace would become even more acute.

It is this dangerous situation which gives such importance to any proposals for a first partial step to lessen the danger by establishing a zone in Central Europe free from nuclear weapons, and possibly also with limitation of armaments or reduction or withdrawal of occupying troops over a given zone. This is the general type of proposal covered under the term "disengagement in Europe". These are not proposals for the long-term solution of the problem of peace in Europe, which would require the replacement of N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact by a European Collective Security Treaty, and the withdrawal of all occupying forces, together with a wider international agreement for the banning of nuclear weapons and the ending of the cold war. These partial proposals for disengagement would represent a first step to relaxing the tension and preparing the way for a wider settlement. For this reason all such proposals should receive the most careful and sympathetic consideration not from the standpoint of the advantage of one or other side but on the basis of the interests of all the peoples of Europe and of peace.

At the present moment the Rapacki Plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, proposed by the Polish Government, is in the forefront of international diplomatic consideration. At the same time a wide series of other plans, both official and unofficial, have been put forward during the recent period, such as the Eden Plan (in more than one form), the Macmillan Plan, the Gaitskell Plan, the Fabian pamphlet of Denis Healey on *A Neutral Belt in Europe*, and a host of further proposals. The different successive plans and proposals put forward are so varied in type, and cover such a complexity of issues within the general conception of "disengagement", as often to give rise to confusion between them and contradictory arguments on what should be involved in "disengagement". Hence it might be useful to review the main plans put forward, and to consider what should be the

most constructive and practicable lines to pursue on this question if disengagement in Europe is to become a reality.

I. Types of Plans for Disengagement

There are many types of plans for disengagement in Europe which might be distinguished.

Demilitarisation Plans

These comprise proposals for the reduction or limitation of armaments, and for total or partial withdrawal of occupying troops, either for both parts of Germany or for a wider area over Europe.

Nuclear-Free Zone

This is the proposal of the Rapacki Plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe. Similar proposals have been more tentatively suggested in relation to the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Albania, and the Middle East.

The Gaitskell-Healey Plan

This is a variant which combines certain features of the above two types, in that it proposes to extend the area of the Rapacki Plan by the inclusion of Hungary, and to extend the ban on nuclear arms in this area by the withdrawal of occupying troops in respect of the five states involved (one in N.A.T.O. and four in the Warsaw Treaty), with further provisions for German unification and European mutual security, and possibly withdrawal of the states involved from N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Treaty respectively.

A host of further proposals, representing variations on the above or extensions, have been put forward, such as the Liddell-Hart scheme for an "International Safety Belt" extending from Scandinavia through Central Europe to the Balkans, the Middle East and up to India, Pakistan and Burma.

II. Historical Background—Before and After the Paris Agreement

To see these plans in perspective it is necessary to take into account the historical background of the conditions under which these various plans have been successively put forward. The decisive watershed and dividing line in this development is the final ratification of the Paris Agreements for the rearmament of Western Germany as a member of N.A.T.O. in May, 1955.

Prior to the ratification of the Paris Agreements the central question for the relaxation of tension in

Central Europe was the question of Germany and German unification. At the Potsdam Conference at the end of the war in 1945 the Soviet Union had proposed the establishment already of a provisional all-German Administration, with a view to reaching as rapidly as possible, as soon as the agreed measures of demilitarisation and de-Nazification had been carried through, a peaceful united Germany and all-German Government within the limits of disarmament and de-Nazification laid down by the Allies. The Western Powers opposed this, and followed instead the plan of transforming the military zones and division into economic and political zones of Germany. After establishing Bizonia in the West, they carried this forward by the amalgamation of the three western zones into a single Western Zone, introduced a new currency to cut off the Western Zone economically from Eastern Germany, and finally transformed the Western Zone, where the old monopolist and pro-Nazi forces had been re-established in all the dominant positions, into a new West German State. The culminating stage of this process was the decision to rearm West Germany in violation of the Potsdam Agreement, and to make a rearmed West Germany a member of the Western anti-Soviet military alliance (N.A.T.O.).

In 1954, at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Berlin, the final discussion on the question of Germany and German unification took place prior to the new stage of the Paris Agreements. The Western Powers proposed that all-German elections should be held under foreign military occupation (that is, with three-quarters of Germany under Western military occupation and with the old Nazi and pro-Nazi forces in control of the administrative machine), and that this should be followed by a peace treaty and the subsequent withdrawal of occupying troops. This proposal was referred to at the time as the Eden Plan, though it should not be confused with the subsequent Eden Plan for disengagement. The Soviet Union proposed that the first step should be the withdrawal of occupying troops from Germany in order to make possible free all-German elections, and that then a peace treaty with a united democratic Germany should be drawn up together with provisions for European security.

In January, 1955, on the eve of the ratification of the Paris Agreements the Soviet Union issued a final statement of its proposals with regard to German unification, and of warning of the significance if West Germany became a member of N.A.T.O. The Soviet Union's statement of January 15th, 1955, proposed that the Four Powers responsible for Germany (the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union) should agree on the holding of free all-German elections, with freedom of par-

ticipation for all democratic parties, and with international supervision. If these proposals should be rejected, and West Germany incorporated in N.A.T.O., the Soviet Union gave the warning that under these conditions any further Four-Power negotiations on German unification would "become impossible":

"The Paris Agreements run counter to the interests of the German people especially because they would consolidate for many years the splitting of Germany . . . the most important matter for the solving of the German problem is the solving of the problem of the restoration of the unity of Germany. In order to solve this problem it is essential to hold negotiations with the U.S.A., Britain, France and the Soviet Union on the question of the restoration of the unity of Germany on the basis of holding all-German elections. *Such negotiations would lose any meaning and would become impossible if the Paris Agreements are ratified.*" (Italics added)

III. The Eden Plan and the Geneva Directive

After the ratification of the Paris Agreements the problem of the future of Germany and of peace in Europe entered into radically new conditions.

Germany now consisted of two sovereign states aligned in opposing military blocs. The establishment of the German Federal Republic (West Germany) as a sovereign state had been followed by the establishment of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) as a sovereign state. The inclusion of the German Federal Republic in N.A.T.O. had been followed by the establishment of the Warsaw Treaty and the inclusion of the German Democratic Republic in the Warsaw Treaty Alliance. Thus the question of German unification became henceforth a question of negotiation between two sovereign states and no longer a question of Four-Power decision controlling the future of Germany. Since the German Federal Republic refused to negotiate with the German Democratic Republic, a new approach had to be sought towards the problem of lessening tension in Central Europe.

It was in this situation that the question of "disengagement" in Central Europe arose as a new approach, given the situation of two sovereign German states aligned in opposing military blocs as a result of the Paris Agreements.

The Geneva Summit Conference in July, 1955, took the first step towards this new approach. At this conference the British Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, put forward a first tentative plan for a demilitarised zone or zone of limited armaments or mutual inspection on either side of the line of division between East and West in Europe. This is the proposal which has since been known as the Eden Plan.

The British Government has never officially published the Eden Plan, which remains buried in the proceedings of the Summit Conference. The United States opposed the Eden Plan and compelled its withdrawal. British official propaganda has subsequently sought to distort the facts with regard to the Eden Plan, and to allege that it was put forward subject to the prior unification of Germany, and that its reference to the dividing line between East and West was a reference to the eastern frontier of a future united Germany. This is a falsification. In order to establish the facts it is necessary to examine with care what the Eden Plan actually proposed.

Sir Anthony Eden put forward in fact two plans at the Summit Conference. One on July 18th and one on July 21st. The plan on July 18th was a plan for a demilitarised zone on either side of the line dividing East and West. The terms of his proposal were:

"We would be ready to discuss and try to reach agreement as to the total of forces and armaments *on each side in Germany*, and the countries neighbouring Germany. . . . We should be ready to examine the possibility of a demilitarised zone between East and West. . . . I will sum up. There is the suggestion of a mutual security pact. There is the prospect of an agreement about the total of forces and armaments *of the two groups, both in Germany and in the countries neighbouring Germany*. This would be subject to reciprocal supervision. There is also a conception of a demilitarised zone."

It will be seen from the passages which have here been underlined that his proposals for a demilitarised zone or zone of limited armaments explicitly referred to "on each side in Germany" and "the two groups in Germany". The three proposals set out were not presented as *depending* on unification of Germany. On the contrary, having set out these three proposals for a demilitarised zone on either side of the existing dividing line between East and West he went on:

"If we would start work on these lines we should have a chance of providing a constructive and encouraging plan to ensure peace for Europe. These ideas would give real security, and it is from the lack of that security that Germany is kept divided today."

Thus, so far from the Eden Plan for a demilitarised zone on either side of the dividing line between East and West in Germany being presented as dependent on the unification of Germany, he presented his proposals as a first step to "start work on" and thereby create favourable conditions for the future approach to the question of the unification of Germany.

On July 21st Sir Anthony Eden put forward a more limited plan (the second Eden Plan) for a zone of mutual inspection on either side of the dividing line between East and West.

"Sir Anthony Eden declared that he had a modest proposal that could be immediately adopted. His proposal was that inspection teams approved by either side should conduct observations in a specified area on either side of the line dividing East and West."

Both plans thus have reference to the existing line of division between East and West, running through Germany, and were not made dependent on the future unification of Germany.

The Geneva Summit Conference Directive incorporated these proposals for a zone of limited armaments on either side of the line dividing East and West. In the first part of Section 1 on "European Security and Germany" the Geneva Directive instructed the Foreign Ministers to consider:

"A security pact for Europe or for a part of Europe, including the assumption by member nations of an obligation not to resort to force and to deny assistance to an aggressor; limitation, control and inspection in regard to armed forces and armaments; establishment between East and West of a zone in which disposition of armed forces would be subject to mutual agreement; and also to consider other possible proposals relating to the solution of this problem."

There was no mention of the unification of Germany in this paragraph dealing with European security and a demilitarised zone between East and West. The question of the unification of Germany was dealt with subsequently in a later paragraph. Thus the Geneva Summit proposals for a demilitarised zone on either side of the line dividing East and West were not made dependent on the unification of Germany. Both the Geneva Directive and the Eden Plan proposals were for a demilitarised zone over an area extending equally on either side of the existing frontier between East and West running through Germany.

IV. The Macmillan Plan and the Repudiation of the Geneva Directive

At the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Geneva in October, 1955, the Western Powers repudiated the Geneva Directive which had instructed them to consider the question of European Collective Security (including the proposal for a demilitarised zone between East and West) and to come to the question of German unification only within the context of European Collective Security.

Instead of following the Geneva Directive, they demanded that German unification on their terms, including the right of such a united Germany to be an armed member of N.A.T.O., should be a prior condition to any proposal for European Collective Security or a demilitarised zone.

In accordance with this new line the proposal for a demilitarised zone put forward by the Western Powers at the Foreign Ministers' Con-

ference, through the mouth of Mr. Macmillan and subsequently known as the Macmillan Plan, completely reversed the whole meaning of the Eden Plan and the Geneva Directive.

The Macmillan Plan proposed:

1. That the first step should be the unification of Germany through free elections.
2. That this united Germany should be free to be a member of N.A.T.O.
3. That the demilitarised zone should then run along the eastern frontier of this united Germany, and consequently cover an agreed zone of territory on either side of the eastern frontier of a rearmed Germany in N.A.T.O.

The effect of this proposal would be to demilitarise the existing territories of the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia, while leaving intact the existing military set-up in Western Germany and all the N.A.T.O. countries. This was the caricature of a proposal for a "demilitarised zone between East and West" now put forward by the Western Powers as a basis for wrecking the Foreign Ministers' Conference.

V. Soviet Proposals for Withdrawal of Troops and Limitation of Armaments in Europe

In the period since the ratification of the Paris Agreements and since the Geneva Summit Conference the Soviet Union has put forward a continuous series of proposals for withdrawal of occupying troops and for a limitation of armaments either within Germany or over Europe as a whole.

The general line of these proposals was set out in the concrete propositions put forward by the Soviet Union at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in October, 1955, incorporating both the Eden Plans and adding steps for withdrawal of occupying troops and limitation of armaments. Subsequent statements have further developed these proposals. In relation to Germany the Soviet Union has proposed:

- (a) The withdrawal of all occupying troops in both parts of Germany.
- (b) Failing agreement on total withdrawal, a partial withdrawal, reduction and limitation of occupying forces.
- (c) Agreement against the establishment of any nuclear weapons or arms in either part of Germany.
- (d) Limitation of the size of the national armed forces on either side in Germany.

In respect of Europe the Soviet Union has proposed:

- (a) The withdrawal of all occupying troops from Europe East and West.
- (b) Failing agreement on a total withdrawal, agreed reduction or limitation of occupying troops.

(c) Replacement of N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Treaty by a European Collective Security Treaty.

(d) Failing agreement on such replacement, participation of N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Treaty Powers in a European Security Treaty with reciprocal undertakings against aggression.

Over thirty successive proposals along these general lines have been put forward by the Soviet Union during the past two years.

The Western Powers have rejected all these proposals and have declared that they are not prepared to withdraw their occupying troops in Europe.

Thus the situation on the question of withdrawal of occupying troops, reduction and limitation of armed forces or armaments, or a demilitarised zone in Central Europe reached a complete deadlock. The danger of the situation was rendered more acute when N.A.T.O. officially announced the decision to adopt nuclear strategy. It was made clear that it was intended to equip the American forces in West Germany with nuclear weapons, and in this way to establish nuclear weapons and missile sites on German soil. The indications also showed clearly, although the West German Government sought at first to avoid a declaration on this subject, that the plan involved the future equipment of the new West German army also with nuclear weapons (as General Norstad's television interview on February 25th, 1958, has since made clear).

The acute and deadly menace of this new development is evident. As with each previous new step from the side of the Western Powers, it would compel a corresponding step on the Eastern side. The recognition of the German Federal Republic as a sovereign state was followed by a recognition of the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign state. The establishment of N.A.T.O. led to the establishment of the Warsaw Treaty. The rearming of Western Germany compelled the very limited arming of Eastern Germany (but with no conscription, and with effectives less than one-third of the numbers in Western Germany). Now nuclear arming of Western Germany would compel corresponding measures in Eastern Germany and Eastern Europe. This is the menace that confronts us today.

VI. The Rapacki Plan

It was in this situation of acute danger that once again a new initiative was made from the socialist camp to break the deadlock and open the way to diminishing the menace of nuclear war arising in Central Europe. This new initiative was the Rapacki Plan put forward by the Polish Government in the autumn of 1957.

Already the Warsaw Treaty Powers' Declaration in January, 1956, had put forward the proposal that there should be agreement against the estab-

lishment of nuclear weapons in either East or West Germany. This proposal was further put forward by the Soviet Union to the Disarmament Sub-Committee in March, 1956, and in the letter of Bulganin to Macmillan in July, 1957.

During the Disarmament Sub-Committee proceedings in August and September, 1957, the Soviet representative put forward the suggestion that agreement should be reached to ban nuclear weapons over "the territories of the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic and all states adjoining to them".

In October, 1957, the Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki, in a speech before the United Nations put forward his proposal for a zone free from nuclear weapons to include Germany East and West, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In December, 1957, this Plan was formally presented by the Polish Government to the United States, Britain and France. Support was subsequently announced by the Soviet Union and by Czechoslovakia.

A Memorandum of the Polish Government on February 14th, 1958, further elaborated the details of the Rapacki Plan. The Plan proposed:

1. The four states should bind themselves not to produce or import nuclear weapons of any kind or to allow the stationing of such weapons or of any equipment to service them on their territories.

2. The four Powers—U.S.A., Britain, France and the Soviet Union—should undertake not to maintain nuclear weapons in the armaments of their forces stationed in the area, and not to transfer such weapons or equipment to governments or other bodies there.

3. All states possessing nuclear weapons should pledge themselves not to use them against any target in the zone.

4. An effective system of control should include both aerial and ground inspection, with the machinery of control run and supervised by representatives of N.A.T.O. and Warsaw Treaty Powers, as well as by other states if desired.

5. Agreement should be embodied either in an international convention or in a series of unilateral declarations (the latter method met the objection of certain states against recognising the G.D.R.).

The Western Powers have agreed on the necessity to give consideration to the Rapacki Plan. Mr. Macmillan for Britain has added that there are many "obvious objections" to the Plan. President Eisenhower has thrown doubts on its significance in view of the long range of modern nuclear weapons being able to leap across any nuclear-free zone. President Adenauer for the West German Government has denounced the Rapacki Plan with extreme hostility; but it may be noted that the leader of

the West German Social Democratic Party Ollenhauer has declared support.

The Labour Party has declared support for the principle of disengagement in Europe, and urged negotiation on the basis of the Rapacki Plan. At the same time leading Labour Party spokesmen have put forward a special proposal for a "neutral zone" in Central Europe. This proposal was originally put forward by Mr. Gaitskell and has become known as the Gaitskell Plan. It has been further elaborated in the pamphlet of Denis Healey on *A Neutral Belt in Europe* and has been widely popularised in the Labour press and by many Labour spokesmen.

VII. The Gaitskell Plan

The first indication of the Gaitskell Plan was given by Mr. Gaitskell in his speech in Parliament in December, 1956, when he declared:

"We suggest that the idea of a large neutral area, which would be guaranteed by a Security Pact and from which armed forces would be withdrawn, both on the Russian side and our side, is something which really offers a considerable opportunity for achieving two things at the same time: the freedom of the peoples in the satellite countries and the security of that part of Europe." (Hugh Gaitskell, House of Commons, December 19th, 1956.)

In March, 1957, in a speech in West Berlin, Mr. Gaitskell elaborated the details of his proposal to cover five essential points:

1. The gradual withdrawal of all foreign forces from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East and West Germany.

2. The establishment of control over the national forces which it is agreed that these countries shall possess—if possible as part of a wider disarmament plan.

3. Reunification of Germany on the basis of genuinely free elections.

4. A European Mutual Security Pact to guarantee the territorial integrity of the countries of the neutral zone, to be endorsed by Russia, America, France and Britain.

5. If desired by Russia, the simultaneous renunciation of N.A.T.O. by Germany and of the Warsaw Pact by Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

In April, 1957, in a speech at Rome, Mr. Gaitskell further defined his conception:

"The price of withdrawing allied troops to neutralise both halves of Germany would be worth paying, provided that the Agreement included Russian withdrawal from the satellites, the democratisation of these satellite countries, the continuance of NATO and the continued presence of American troops in Europe, which will be necessary for some time." (*Times*, 25/4/57.)

It will be seen that the Gaitskell Plan, which is sometimes confused in general discussion with the

Rapacki Plan, or with plans for the neutralisation of Germany, or with general plans for the withdrawal of occupying troops in Europe, has certain peculiar features.

First it proposes to add Hungary to the countries covered by the Rapacki Plan, so that the proposed area would include one country of N.A.T.O. (West Germany) and four of the Warsaw Treaty (G.D.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary).

Second, it proposes that American and British military occupation shall continue in Europe up to the Rhine, while Soviet occupying forces shall be withdrawn from East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (in fact there are none in Czechoslovakia)—that is, from all the countries of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Rumania, up to the borders of the Soviet Union.

Third, it proposes that N.A.T.O. shall be maintained, while the Warsaw Treaty shall in fact be dismantled.

Thus, the Gaitskell Plan is much closer in its political aims to the character of the Macmillan Plan. Apart from West Germany, its proposals for withdrawal of troops and neutralisation would apply only to Eastern Europe and not to Western Europe.

The essential purpose underlying these conceptions of the Gaitskell Plan was made clear by Denis Healey in his pamphlet. He rejects the proposal for a neutral Germany, or for the withdrawal of all occupying troops in Europe East and West, on the grounds that either of these proposals would work out to the disadvantage of N.A.T.O. and the West. The aim, it is made clear, is to dismantle the military alliance of the Socialist countries, while maintaining N.A.T.O., and to push the dividing line between East and West further east to the borders of the Soviet Union. "The Iron Curtain is too far west", he declares on page 10, and adds in a further revealing passage that an advantage of the Plan would be that in the event of war between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union "*the fighting, if fighting began, would begin on the Soviet frontier*" (page 10). Thus the real content of the Gaitskell Plan is closer to the Truman policy of "containment" and the Dulles policy of "liberation" and "rolling back the frontier of Communism".

On the other hand, the positive support given by the Labour Party to the general aim of disengagement in Europe, and the favourable attitude to consideration of the Rapacki Plan, is an important positive feature in the situation. It is only the actual detail proposals of the Gaitskell Plan which require criticism in the Labour movement.

The Gaitskell Plan, put forward by Mr. Gaitskell as leader of the Labour Party, has never been directly endorsed by the Labour Party Conference.

The 1957 Labour Party Conference resolution on foreign policy demanded, in respect of Europe:

(1) "the peaceful reunification of Germany by a Five-Power Agreement within the framework of a European Security Agreement";

(2) "a European Security Pact as the means of reducing tension in Europe".

This rather than the Gaitskell Plan is up to the present the official policy of the Labour Party as decided by its Conference, and provides the most constructive line as a basis for the campaign of the Labour movement.

VIII. Our Policy—(1) The Nuclear-Free Zone

In the light of this review of the various plans put forward, what are the conclusions to be drawn for the most effective policy to be pursued in order to achieve the aim of disengagement in Europe?

The review of the policy put forward reveals that the conception of disengagement in Europe covers a very wide field. The measures which may be attempted to achieve it can vary from a very limited character to a very wide and extended character.

In the approach to this question it is accordingly necessary to distinguish between the larger or longer-term aims and the more immediate measures possible of achievement in the existing international situation.

Our longer-term aims envisage, in the words of the *British Road to Socialism*, "A European Collective Security system coupled with the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from European countries", "the elimination of nuclear weapons" and "an all-round reduction of armaments".

In the immediate present situation the Rapacki Plan for a nuclear-free zone in Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia holds the centre of diplomatic attention. It is arousing wide support from the most varied quarters. It is evident that this offers the most favourable concrete proposal on which to concentrate in order to achieve a first step forward in the direction of disengagement.

A number of criticisms and objections from various quarters have been brought forward against the Rapacki Plan. These objections cover three main lines.

First, there are criticisms on technical and practical grounds with regard to the possibility of fulfilment. After the initial formulation of the Plan criticism was expressed with regard to the lack of proposals for control and inspection. This has now been covered by the more detailed memorandum of the Polish Government of February 14th, 1958. Other technical difficulties have been raised on the question of the definition of nuclear weapons (as distinct from nuclear warheads) in view of the

possibilities of adaptation of normal large-scale artillery. The interview of Foreign Minister Rapacki to *The Times*, published in its issue of February 18th, 1958, sufficiently answered these questions, and indicated the possibility of "common sense" solutions on these technical points.

The second line of criticism has been to argue that the establishment of a nuclear-free zone would weaken N.A.T.O. to the advantage of the Soviet Union, in view of the alleged Soviet superiority in conventionally armed forces. Mr. Macmillan in Parliament on February 19th, 1958, even extended this to a general argument against any ban on nuclear weapons, since he claimed that this would leave the Soviet Union with "two hundred divisions" in Europe confronting a much smaller number of "divisions" (actually much larger divisions) of N.A.T.O. It is obvious that this argument would make the professed aim of the Western Powers during the past ten years to reach agreement for a ban on nuclear weapons, if only there could be agreement on adequate inspection and control, a piece of self-confessed hypocrisy. But in fact the argument lacks foundation. For in reality the Soviet Union has continuously offered an agreed limitation of the size of armed forces to figures which were originally proposed by the Western Powers, and which would rule out any question of superiority in this sphere. The general principle of these figures was to lay down equality of armed forces for the United States and the Soviet Union (e.g. one to one-and-a-half millions each), and half this level for Britain and France (650,000), so that on this basis the Anglo-French armed forces, without the United States, would be equal to the total Soviet Union forces required for all purposes of defence on its vast frontiers, west, north, south and east. When the Soviet Union declared agreement for a limitation of armed forces on the basis of these figures proposed by the British and French Governments, the Western Powers immediately withdrew their support and voted against their own figures. Thus the argument used by spokesmen of the Western Powers that the establishment of a nuclear-free zone would give the advantage to the Soviet Union in the sphere of "conventional armed forces" cannot be regarded as justified or honest.

The third line of objection has been that advanced by President Eisenhower and repeated by many critics. This is the argument that the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe would have little or no strategic significance, since the range of modern long-range missiles would reach across the proposed area and thus render it ineffective. This argument misses the point of the Rapacki Plan. The Rapacki Plan is not a plan to eliminate the menace of nuclear war; the fulfilment of this aim would require a wider agreement for

the banning of nuclear weapons. The Rapacki Plan is a proposal for a first step to relax international tension in Europe. Agreement on such a first step would change the political climate in Europe and open the way to further steps. It would eliminate the possibility of short-range nuclear conflict arising on the dangerous line of division between East and West in Europe. It is worth noting that the Soviet Union has also proposed to the United States, Britain and France in February, 1958, not to include rocket weapons, i.e. long-range as well as short-range nuclear weapons, in the area.

Above all, the Rapacki Plan is of vital present importance, because at this moment nuclear weapons and installations have not yet been established in Germany, but the plans for their establishment in West Germany are already very advanced, and their establishment would inevitably lead to corresponding measures on the other side of the dividing line. European opinion has already been acutely aware of the menace represented by a rearmed West Germany, controlled by the new neo-Nazi and militarist ruling forces, dominating N.A.T.O. and commanding the N.A.T.O. forces, and openly proclaiming aims for the revision of frontiers eastward at the expense of other states. If this rearmed neo-Nazi West Germany, with open revanchist aims, were also to be equipped with nuclear arms, all the conditions would be created for a conflagration in Europe. The plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, including both parts of Germany, represents the indispensable first step to bar the way to this danger, and is therefore of major strategic significance.

IX. Our Policy—(2) Demilitarisation in Europe

Concentration on the present immediate question of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe as a first step to disengagement does not diminish the importance of other and further measures for the withdrawal or reduction of occupying troops and the limitation of armed forces and armaments.

Proposals for such withdrawal of occupying troops and limitation of armaments have been repeatedly put forward by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Powers. The Western Powers have so far refused to accept such proposals.

Two types of proposals in this field arise for consideration: (1) in respect of the two parts of Germany; (2) for the extension of such measures to a wider area in Europe.

In respect of Germany the withdrawal of all foreign occupying forces in both the present states comprising Germany would represent a very important step in the interests of peace and in the interests of the German people. Such a step would prepare the most favourable conditions for the future reunification of Germany (possibly through

the initial form of a confederation of the two existing states with a common peaceful foreign policy) and the establishment in this way, in accordance with the original agreements on Potsdam, of a peaceful demilitarised democratic Germany. The neutralisation of Germany, on lines similar to the neutrality of Austria (which would mean the G.F.R. ceasing to be a member of N.A.T.O. and the G.D.R. ceasing to be a member of the Warsaw Pact) would represent in the present situation a very important step forward for the aim of peace in Europe.

The proposal for the extension of the withdrawal of occupying troops over a wider area in Europe would represent a still further important step from the present abnormal situation to a peaceful situation in Europe. Such a withdrawal would need to be carried out equally on both sides, East and West. In its fullest operation this would mean the withdrawal of all American forces from Western Europe (including from Britain and Spain) and of the British forces from West Germany, and the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from the countries of Eastern Europe. Proposals for a *one-sided* unequal withdrawal on the lines of the Gaitskill Plan, which would seek to maintain American military occupation up to the Rhine while calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces to within the borders of the Soviet Union, cannot be regarded in their present form as a serious proposal for disengagement in Europe, but would rather represent an attempt to dismantle the military alliance of the socialist countries, while maintaining the Western military alliance. Hence, the principle of *equality* in the withdrawal or reduction of occupying troops in Europe East and West is of essential importance in order to reach an agreed settlement.

The argument is frequently used by Western spokesmen that the Soviet Union would never agree to a withdrawal of Soviet troops from the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, since it is alleged that the people's democratic regime in these countries rests upon Soviet bayonets and would collapse on the withdrawal of Soviet occupying forces. The falsity of this argument has been demonstrated by the contrast of the respective attitudes on the question of the withdrawal of troops. For it is the Soviet Union which has repeatedly urged the withdrawal of all occupying troops from Europe East and West. It is the Western Powers who have consistently opposed this and insisted on a continued stationing of occupying troops in Western Germany, thereby compelling the presence of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe.

This situation has made it possible for the Soviet Union's spokesmen to reverse the argument about alleged fears of withdrawing troops of occupation. This was illustrated in the statement of N. S. Khrushchov in 1957:

"In order to reach a *détente* in international relations we have already called on the Western Powers to withdraw their forces from Germany and other European states, to close down their military bases. The Soviet Union would also evacuate its troops from Germany, Rumania, Hungary and Poland, where they are stationed under the Warsaw Treaty. Let us withdraw our forces and see how the events would develop then. We shall see, firstly, that the People's Democratic Governments will be very stable, and secondly, we shall verify in practice which authorities enjoy the greater sympathy of the peoples.

"It is said in the bourgeois countries that the socialist governments are kept in power only by force of arms. We have proposed to withdraw the troops in order to see what the situation would be in the socialist states, and also in Western Germany and the other countries from where troops would be evacuated. But the United States, Britain and France refuse to do so.

"We are not afraid of withdrawing our troops from all the countries where they are now stationed. Britain, the United States and France fear this. The Governments of Italy and West Germany are also afraid of foreign troops being evacuated from their countries. Adenauer, for instance, asks Truman for troops to remain in West Germany. Why? Simply because the Governments of these countries do not know what will happen to them when the American forces leave. They do not know how French, Italians, Germans, Greeks and others will behave; so this means that they are not sure of themselves. They are not sure of the people's adherence to the capitalist system. Truth is on our side. Strength is also on our side.

"It is not a question of strength of arms, but strength of ideas, of ideology. The peoples cannot be subdued by force or terrorised into obedience." (N. S. Khrushchov: interview with Editor of *Asahi Shimbun*, 18/6/57.)

The demand for the withdrawal of *all* troops of occupation in Europe East and West corresponds to the interests of peace in Europe.

X. Flexibility and Principle

The question of disengagement in Europe is at present at the stage of preliminary international discussion and negotiation. The conception is still in a fluid stage. Therefore it would be mistaken to lay down beforehand a single rigid plan and insist on its acceptance. The Rapacki Plan is also a proposal put forward for further discussion and negotiation.

If the Summit Conference meets in the near future—and it is the purpose of all supporters of peace, and the insistent demand of the overwhelming majority of the people in all countries that it shall meet with the least delay—then it is to be expected that the question of disengagement in Europe, and especially the question of a nuclear-free zone, as proposed in the Rapacki Plan, will be

one of the principal issues under consideration. In such negotiations the aim will need to be to reach the widest measure of agreement possible. In the nature of the present situation such an agreement could only be an initial compromise agreement, since much ground will have to be covered before the wider international agreements which are desirable can be reached. The essence of a compromise is that neither side secures all the points it would desire, and that both sides may have to accept points which they would have preferred to see differently decided, but that from the point of view of both sides the agreement reached is preferable to no agreement. This consideration needs to be borne in mind in our approach.

In this review the attempt has been made to consider the principles of disengagement in Europe, to review the various plans put forward, and to

examine the possible lines for a settlement. Such an examination of principle cannot pre-judge the living diplomatic situation as it still further develops, whether more or less favourably, towards the aims of disengagement and peace, and the consequent concrete further issues that may arise. Hence in our approach to the further development of proposals for disengagement in Europe, as the international political situation and negotiations further develop, it will be essential to combine flexibility of approach with a firm grasp of the essential principles involved in working towards the aim of disengagement in Europe and the wider aim of peace.

At the present moment, when the prospect and tasks of a Summit Conference draw closely into view, the proposal for disengagement in Europe is of especial importance as one of the most outstanding moves to give concrete practical shape to the principle of peaceful co-existence.

The By-Elections and Labour Party Policy

John Gollan

THERE has never been a political situation in Britain quite like the present. The Tory Government is despised by the people, its policy is hated, it is losing votes in parliamentary by-elections: and yet the Opposition, the Labour Party, is not gaining what the Government is losing. These voters are either in the main abstaining in large numbers or voting Liberal where there is a Liberal candidate.

Some weeks before the Rochdale result, the Labour weekly *Forward* published the results of an inquiry into the current political mood of Britain. Morgan Phillips, Secretary of the Labour Party, summed up these results in an article in which he declared: "Apathy is Labour's greatest enemy." He contrasted the reluctance of people to come to political meetings with the fact that, on official estimates, some eight million people watch the average political broadcast on television. He pointed out that through television a Labour spokesman can address this vast audience in twenty minutes, reaching more people than any Labour pioneer could have hoped to address in the whole of his lifetime.

What then is the source of the apathy he diagnosed? Morgan Phillips wrote:

"It derives from ignorance—an ignorance of the fundamental difference between the Labour and Conservative Parties."

If, after all Labour's T.V. appearances, its Secretary admits that the average viewer cannot see the fundamental difference between the two main parties, surely the time has come for a radical change in Labour's programme. But this is the last conclusion which is drawn.

"Marginal" Voters

The fact is that Labour policy has been the subject of acute dissension ever since the 1945 Labour Government. The leaders of the Labour Party are trying to have it both ways. To counter the forces of the Left in the Labour Party and trade unions arguing for a radical socialist policy, they seek to justify the increasingly "moderate" (that is, capitalist) character of right-wing policy with the claim that they cannot win an election without winning over the so-called "marginal" voters. And because of these "marginal" voters, the Labour leaders argue that their policy must be one of moderation, not a socialist policy which, they claim, would frighten the voters away.

This attitude was most clearly expressed by Gaitskell at the 1957 Labour Party Conference, in the debate on nationalisation:

"The Executive could have come to you today and presented a document with a long list of further industries to be nationalised, without a new idea in it, and you would probably have received it with acclamation. Why did we not do that? Because we would have been putting something to you which we did not believe we could carry out, and which the *electorate were bound to reject.*"

But at the same time as they are trying to justify "moderation", on the other hand they declare that they must aim to convince the electorate that their policy is fundamentally different from that of the Tories—for otherwise why does the Labour Party exist?

The argument for "moderation" as the way to electoral victory is not new. It has been going on ever since the experiences of the 1945 Labour Government. As 1950 and a new General Election approached, the problem of what was to be Labour's future programme was actively discussed in the movement. The discussions have continued from the General Election of 1950, in which Labour was returned with a small majority, to the General Elections of 1951 and 1955, and now again in preparation for the next General Election.

Overlapping Policies

Before the 1950 General Election the argument put forward by the official leadership was that it was necessary to consolidate the gains made in the period 1945-50, and that no further radical measures should be included in Labour's programme. This view was advanced above all by Herbert Morrison. In effect it was supported by the *New Statesman*, which declared (March 12th, 1949):

"In sum, the Labour Party will need to appeal to the electorate next year less with new projects of nationalisation or of development of the social services . . . than on the strength of its record and its ability both to consolidate what it has well begun and to hold victories which it has achieved. . . . It will be no more than its predecessors in a position to convert Great Britain into a socialist country—a change for which electoral opinion is not yet ripe—but it should not be less socialist."

The outcome of the discussions was the Labour General Election Programme of 1950, called *Let Us Go Forward Together*. It promised to maintain full employment, to increase production, to encourage enterprise in public and private industry: the sugar and cement industries were to be nationalised; there were some general statements on the cost of living and on social services and housing; and there was a general review of

foreign affairs without any definite proposals. By no stretch of imagination could it be called a socialist programme.

Such was the programme with which Labour fought the election against the Tories. In comparing it with the Tory programme, *This Is The Road*, H. G. Nicholas, in *The British General Election of 1950*, wrote:

"Perhaps the most striking feature of *This Is the Road* was its overlap in substance, though not in form, with *Let Us Go Forward Together*. The acceptance by both of the Welfare State led sometimes to a competition in the conferring of favours on the electorate. Each emphasised the need for greater and cheaper production. Though Labour dwelt on the dangers of private ownership, they agreed that both forms were here to stay and that the problem was to make them as efficient as possible. Each, for reasons both of state and of campaigning, sought to foster the domestic food producer. Abroad, they had little to say of the future and did not seriously differ about the past. Their differences were in fact often differences only in attitude and emphasis, though they were none the less real enough to make the ensuing battle keen and close." (p. 119)

The General Election of 1950 was fought with a much larger electorate than in 1945, so that the votes for both Labour and Tories were higher. But Labour only gained 1½ million votes, while the Tories gained 2½ million; Labour rose from 12 million in 1945 to 13½ million in 1950; while the Tory vote rose from 10 million to 12½ million. The Tories gained 89 seats. The Labour vote, it is true, had gone up; but there was a substantial Tory recovery from 1945.

1955 Elections

The Labour Government resigned in 1951. Labour's new election manifesto marked a further retreat. On the issue of peace—at a time when the Labour Government had fully accepted the enormous arms programme dictated by the United States—it spoke in general terms of the need to strengthen collective defence and develop backward areas; it promised to maintain full employment; it remarked vaguely that monopolies which "failed the nation" would be nationalised; that price controls would be extended; 200,000 houses built each year, and the social services would be developed towards greater "social equality". Again no real socialist approach.

The election resulted in a rise of 700,000 in the Labour vote—the highest they have yet had. But the Tory vote rose still more, by 1,200,000. The total Labour vote was 13,900,000; the Tory vote 13,700,000; but our famous electoral system gave the Tories a majority of seats in the House of Commons—312 against Labour's 295.

For the 1955 General Election, the Labour manifesto called for disarmament through the United Nations; agreement to end nuclear weapon tests; general support for German unity, for China's entry into the United Nations, for help to develop backward countries. On economic questions it demanded long-term purchasing agreements with other countries; a Consumers' Advisory Council; the re-nationalisation of steel and road haulage, and nationalisation of some sections of the chemicals and machine tool industries. The nationalisation of the sugar and cement industries, which had been in the previous programme, was dropped. On social services it contained some vague phrasing on housing; it promised to restore the free health service; it promised an annual review of the level of old age pensions, and a "radical reform" of education.

No Fundamental Challenge

The result of the 1955 General Election, fought by Labour on these issues, was that Labour's vote fell by 1½ million, to 12,400,000 with a loss of eighteen seats, bringing Labour representation to 277. The Tory vote also fell, but by only 400,000; their total vote was 13,300,000, and they won twenty-two additional seats, bringing them a total of 334.

The conclusions to be drawn from the experience of three general elections fought by Labour on a policy of "moderation" are therefore: (i) since 1945 on a greatly increased electorate, Labour has made an over-all gain of 400,000 votes, while the Tories have gained 3½ million; (ii) even after 1950, there was still a chance of Labour's recovery. Labour's vote was slightly above the Tory vote in the 1951 election; (iii) the crucial Labour relapse was in the period between 1951 and 1955, when in fact, Labour paved the way for the consolidation of the Tory position at the 1955 General Election.

The Labour election manifestos reflected the general policy and line of action that the Labour leadership followed consistently. It could be argued that the period of capitalist prosperity had blunted the class outlook of the workers—but Labour's responsibility was to expose the class nature of the Tory policies, the intensity of exploitation, and the instability of the high level of economic activity. Far from fulfilling this responsibility, the Labour "theoreticians" and in the first place, John Strachey, broadcast theories of capitalism having overcome its difficulties and in fact no longer being the capitalism of pre-war days; and on this basis policies were advanced which differed little in principle from Tory policies on the most crucial issues.

At the centre of Labour's foreign policy was support of the American alliance, the huge arms programme, the rearmament of Western Germany, and subordination to the United States. This was also Tory policy. Labour had the same general economic policy as the Tories—in the name of saving the £ and fighting against inflation, to freeze wages. It completely abandoned specifically socialist measures, and in particular dropped nationalisation. It made no proposals for any significant advance in the social services.

In general the official policy has been to dampen down the movement for higher wages and against rent increases, and to hold back the class struggle. The electoral results were the inevitable result of such a policy.

The recent by-election results have got to be seen against this background. The crisis within the Tory Government continues to grow, as the Thorneycroft resignation shows.

Yet never has Labour's parliamentary performance been more inept, rendered spiritless and ineffective because of no fundamental challenge to the Tories, with policy differences within both the Parliamentary Party and the country as a whole coming sharply to the front once again.

The stream of official policy statements have not only made no impact on the electorate—they have made no impact on Labour activists, and in the case of *Industry and Society* has aroused their active hostility.

There was no counter programme to the Tory economic crisis measures of September last year. In the Defence debate, Labour showed it was in fact in support of nuclear weapons despite last year's resolution on the H-bomb.

There is a sharp contrast between the great mass activity for peace and the complete inactivity of the official leadership up till now or the Government's outright opposition to the trade unions and wage increases and the lack of any counter-action from the Trades Union Congress.

By-Election Results

In the light of all this, therefore, the by-election results are not surprising. They are the epitaph on the whole official position. It is worth while looking at these in some detail.

Since January 1st, 1957, up to the time of the Rochdale result there have been seventeen by-elections. Excluding Carmarthen, where the Government candidate was an alleged Liberal and the Labour candidate who won the seat was Lady Megan Lloyd George, ex-Liberal, we get the following picture for the sixteen results.

In ten of the constituencies there was no Liberal candidate. Of these, two were Labour constituencies, the rest Tory. Compared with the 1955

General Election, the total Tory vote cast in these contests dropped by 66,805, or 25 per cent. But at the same time Labour's total vote dropped by 11,793, or 7 per cent. The voters showed their dissatisfaction with the Government by abstaining. They did not go over to Labour. On the contrary, Labour lost votes in seven of the ten constituencies, including North Lewisham, where they won the election. The only significant advance in the vote was at Warwick.

In the remaining six constituencies (four of which were Tory and two Labour), there was a Liberal candidate in addition to Labour and Tory candidates. In only one of the seats, North Dorset, did a Liberal candidate stand in 1955.

The Tory vote dropped by 62,726 or 42 per cent. The Labour vote dropped by 17,129 or 15 per cent. The Liberal candidates got 62,300 votes. With the intervention of Liberal candidates, not only did the Tory vote drop even more heavily, but the fall in the Labour vote was also greater. Only in North Dorset did the Labour vote go up. Even in Rochdale the Labour victory was on a minority vote, just over 2,500 less than in 1955.

Far from a policy of "moderation" improving Labour's position in the by-elections, it has not reached those dissatisfied with Toryism, and where the Liberals have contested has made a gift of the dissatisfied voters to the Liberal Party.

The regular Gallup Poll on the question: "If there was a General Election tomorrow how would you vote?" published after Rochdale (*News Chronicle*, February 26th), showed the following results: The Tory percentage dropped from 34½ in May 1957, to 29, and Labour's percentage from 42 to 36. The Liberal percentage went up from 6 to 15, and "Don't know" from 16½ to 19.

Paralysing Official Line

Such are the facts. But they are not faced by the leadership of the Labour Party. One would imagine that the position disclosed would lead to the most searching inquiry to discover what is wrong. But to do this, inevitably the policy and activity (or lack of it) of the movement would have to be examined. This is the official dilemma.

This is strikingly illustrated in Aneurin Bevan's analysis of the position in *Tribune* ("Are They Working For Another Coalition?", February 21st, 1958), written after Rochdale. He completely ignores the problem the by-elections have presented to the Labour Party. His argument is two-fold. Too much weight should not be attached to the Rochdale result—"The mood of a by-election is wholly different from that of a General Election". He ridicules the Liberals' lack of principle and programme, and shows how a com-

plete all-out challenge to the Tories in the General Election could well cost them seats and puts as the real issue a Tory/Liberal understanding in the coming General Election—"How much territory can they [the Tories] afford to concede to the Liberals in order still to preserve the reality of power for themselves?" But of the partial swing away from Labour as well as the mass Tory dissensions, he has nothing to say. The essence of the problem is not to preserve the reality of power for the Tories. It is that the crisis in the political position of the Tories creates the possibility of new and decisive inroads into the Tory voting position. Far from this being put, however, which would mean decisive policy changes and mass struggle, the actual prospect is that a Labour election victory is jeopardised by the paralysing official line.

It is perfectly true, of course, that the voting pattern in the by-elections will not be repeated in exactly the same form in a General Election. It is also correct that, despite all the fighting talk in Liberal circles, a Liberal-Tory election pact of some kind is the greater possibility. But these are passive, even if correct speculations, they avoid the crucial political questions involved for Labour if a decisive change is to be brought about.

Many people in Labour circles see this. It is the reason for the Victory for Socialism group. *Reynolds News* wrote editorially after Rochdale (February 16th):

"Mr. McCann's victory, however, should cause questioning as well as jubilation in Labour's ranks. We know now that the Tories are on the run. But there is no real evidence that large numbers of new recruits have been converted to Labour. . . ."

It boggled, however, from drawing any policy conclusions. The official programme in the view of *Reynolds News* was all right, "but the programme is not being preached with imagination and persistence."

The *New Statesman* wrote (February 22nd, 1958):

"If politics were to follow their normal course the Labour Party could reasonably expect a majority; enough Tories would abstain and enough of the floating vote would shift to tip the balance in 50 or 60 marginal constituencies. This may yet happen. But it is not happening now. On the contrary, at a time when the opposition party should be gaining ground, it is scarcely holding its own—and some of its voters are showing a disquieting tendency to drift away and cast protest votes. This is less easy to explain. *But the failure of Mr. Gaitskill and his colleagues to profit from the decline in the Government's fortunes is the most significant fact about British politics today.*" (Our italics.)

This quotation is revealing if for nothing else than it shows the traditional Labour attitude to

elections: there is no conception here either of what is happening in the country or the crucial task facing Labour of a decisive change in the political allegiance of millions of the population.

It is the outlook of the usual parliamentary game of ins and outs of a small normal change in votes tipping the "marginal" seats.

But "politics" are not following their normal course. On the contrary, we are facing an entirely new and rapidly moving political situation. At the 25th National Congress of the Party we pointed out that "Toryism is facing its biggest political crisis since the defeat of Churchill in 1945". Not only had its policies aroused mass working class opposition, "but in fact many former middle class supporters of the Tories have fallen away and will continue to do so". The events of the past year have justified this analysis. This is not the normal business of the swing of the unattached or "floating voter". What is taking place is a major crisis in the Tory Party and among its traditional supporters.

Major Tory Crisis

It confronts the Labour movement with two problems, not one: for this alleged floating vote is not a class or social category. The first problem is one that Labour of recent years has refused to face, namely it has never yet won the whole working class vote for Labour, a position sharply in contrast with the Scandinavian Labour Parties. The second problem is the middle class professional and shopkeeper vote, to which the Labour answer has been "moderation", which has proved bankrupt.

In his interesting and useful article in last month's *Marxism Today*, Andrew Grant¹ shows that of the total occupied population of 22½ million in Britain in 1951, 2 per cent were employers; 3.3 per cent managers; 0.7 per cent higher officials; 5 per cent self-employed, and 5.9 per cent were in the professions. The rest, 83.1 per cent, were workers. Yet in the 1951 General Election out of a total electorate of 34½ million, many of whom did not vote, Labour secured 13,900,000 votes, the Tories 13,700,000, and the Liberals 700,000. He quoted Dr. John Bonham's estimate that of the Tory vote, 4,720,000 came from the business, managerial, professional and higher office sections. On any reckoning the Tory Party must have got millions of working class votes.

Yet the only time when Labour really broke through to victory on a sweeping scale, rallying the middle sections of the people as well as the working class, was in the General Election

of 1945, when the essence of the Labour programme was friendship with the Soviet Union, and nationalisation of a number of important industries. Then, Bonham estimates, the Labour vote among business, managerial, professional and higher office sections of the population in that election was 1,420,000, and this fell to 1,100,000 in the 1951 election which was fought by Labour on a programme of "moderation".

The social, political and moral problems posed by the H-bomb, the patent failure of the cold war policy, and the unmistakable signs that capitalism is fundamentally as economically unstable as ever, has produced a "loosening up" in the British political scene which to many did not seem possible eighteen months ago.

People are starting to look for new solutions, new ways of advance. It is at this moment that we see the full flood of Labour "new thinking" with the claim that the monopolies have served the nation well and there is no need to change them. The effect of this right-wing propaganda of accommodation with capitalism has been to discredit all left-wing and progressive ideas among those looking for new policies for the first time. Everyone knows that the basis of any new Labour electoral advance is the enthusiasm and activity of the active Labour workers in the constituency Labour Parties. Official Labour policy fails to stir them. But in addition the official policy, to those electors now dissatisfied with Toryism, looks little different from what the Government offers.

Thus we see the Liberal vote and the tendency to say "a plague on both your houses" in relation to the two big established parties. The case argued in the Liberal election address in Rochdale was—"The result of this momentous by-election may have a bearing on the whole future pattern of British politics. It is an opportunity—and possibly the last opportunity for some time—for you to register your disapproval of *both* the other parties, and to welcome a new, dynamic force into our political life." Yet the Liberal economic and social policy offered nothing new. The other side of the medal is a tendency, as among some supporters of the Nuclear Disarmament Campaign, to argue that all politicians have failed, that political action must be replaced by moral action, and so on.

The Labour movement in facing this problem, therefore, must see its two sides. To win over those who were or are voting Tory among the working class, the task is the same as it ever was—to develop their class consciousness. Otherwise they will remain in the grip of capitalist ideas and capitalist politics. That is why a change in policy is so urgently required at this moment when traditional voting patterns are being disrupted.

It is this approach, too, which is required if

¹ "Capitalism, Socialism and the Middle Classes," March 1958.

further fundamental inroads are to be made into the middle and professional sections of the population. The Labour movement must show it has the solution to the dilemma of the H-bomb, the solution to Britain's economic and social crisis, that the socialist solution to Britain's problems is the only solution which guarantees a developing future for their professional talents and for their moral integrity.

There is no automatic swing to Labour: this cannot be emphasised too much. That is the lesson of the by-elections. It is by no means certain that the swing away from the Tories in itself would give Labour a victory in a general election. Moreover, we must not underestimate the manoeuvres which the Tory Party will make.

If the British Labour movement is to avoid the repetition of "outs" and "ins" in the Government, it has to win large numbers of people ideologically away from support of capitalism and for a militant working class policy; it has in fact to *break down permanently* the basic support for the Tories among so many working people.

Five Million to Win

It is, therefore, not a question simply of taking a million and a half votes away from the Tories and adding them to Labour. It is rather the fundamental political task, as the next stage in the political struggle, of permanently breaking away from the Tories the votes of some 5 million working class and middle class people. The possibility of achieving this arises particularly now, when in their desperate efforts to maintain British imperialism, the Tories have sacrificed Britain's fundamental interests to the United States, and are conducting a wholesale attack on the whole of the British people.

Yet the tragedy is that so many Labour workers think that this is a fantasy—that no such sweeping change is possible. This outlook is encouraged by the official Labour attitude to elections, of which the *New Statesman* is an example. For example, after the defeat of Labour in the 1955 General Election, Harold Wilson conducted an official inquiry into the causes of the defeat. His report found that Labour had been disorganised and demoralised, owing to:

"disputes in the Party, national and local, and the absence of sufficient clearly defined differences between the parties".

The Report quoted the widely held view that these days the candidate was not important for a major Party in the election, and commented:

"but the absence of a major clash between the parties made the personality and record of the candidate much more important."

Yet in spite of these hints at the political reason for the disorganisation and partial demoralisation among Labour supporters in 1955, the Wilson report concluded that the essential thing was to "get the maximum number of Labour voters to the poll", and not to waste a disproportionate amount of time on efforts to convert Tory supporters. This reflects the general Labour outlook that what wins elections is organisation, not politics, the avoidance at all costs of facing the political issues and struggle involved.

For a Decisive Change of Policy

The by-election results present the Labour movement with the sharpest problems. The whole position urgently calls out for a decisive change in Labour's programme and for a great national campaign of political action around which the movement could win not only the overwhelming majority of the working class, but ever increasing numbers of the middle sections of the population as well.

The electoral situation and the solution of the acute economic, social and political problems facing Britain, go hand in hand. This is the reason for the call of the Communist Party to the National Council of Labour to act and lead. Here is the importance, too, of the new edition of the Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, which could not have appeared at a more appropriate time.

The by-election results are conclusive proof that a new Labour policy is urgently needed. The nature of the fight now for such a policy will determine the character of the programme of the next Labour Government—and even after that Government is established, the fight must go on. What is certain is that this fight can only be carried through to victory through the work of the Communist Party and not the least its electoral struggle and that of the Left in the Labour Party. It was to this that the recent meeting of the Communist Party Executive turned its attention. To the degree its decisions are realised, the great political possibilities now facing us will become a reality.

Parliament and State

Colin Sweet

EVERY socialist revolution differs in form and content from previous revolutions, and in Britain no less than other countries this promises to be the case. The essential lines upon which all socialist revolutions develop were confirmed with the October Revolution of 1917, but the understanding of these will only prove to be a real guide if they are interpreted according to the conditions of our time. This may be something which everyone is aware of, but in practice we find it far from easy to accomplish. No doubt this article, which seeks to say something on the significance of Parliament in the struggle for socialism, will aptly demonstrate this. But the *British Road to Socialism* exists as a programme to be a guide in practice and there is a very obvious need to try and develop the ideas which are summarily set down there.

Socialism will in its modern development be the direct product of the class antagonisms that exist in Britain today, and we see the roots of its development in the growth of monopoly capitalism, which by its alienation of the interests not only of the working class but also of the middle sections and small capitalists, brings about a realignment of the class forces in Britain. This will lead in the course of time to the isolation of monopoly capitalism and to its ultimate defeat. But however deep the roots of a socialist revolution lie in the material economic facts of capitalist exploitation, it must also for its fullest development connect itself with the great revolutions of history and the great struggles of mankind for freedom and happiness.

Modern socialism as it has yet to emerge in Britain will stand on the shoulders of the revolutions of the past, and because of that it will be broader in its social span at every stage of development, and more rapid in its forward sweep to construct a socialist order. Conditions truly exist where the working class can put itself forward not as speaking solely for the interests of itself as a class, but for the great mass of society which wants to avoid the ruination which the career of modern imperialism daily portends. This was expressed with characteristic lucidity by Stalin at the Nineteenth Party Congress when he said in his address to the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries:

"Formerly, the bourgeoisie could afford to play the liberal, to uphold the bourgeois-

democratic liberties, and thus gain popularity with the people. Now not a trace remains of this liberalism. . . . The principle of equal rights for men and nations has been trampled in the mud; it has been replaced by the principle of full rights for the exploited majority. The banner of bourgeois democratic liberties has been thrown overboard. I think that it is you, the representatives of the communist and democratic parties, who will raise the banner and carry it forward, if you want to gather round you the majority of the people. There is nobody else to raise it. Formerly the bourgeoisie was regarded as the head of the nation: it upheld the right and independence of the nation and placed them 'above all else'. Now not a trace remains of the 'national principle'. Now the bourgeoisie sells the rights and independence of the nation for dollars. The banner of national independence and national sovereignty has been thrown overboard. . . . you, the representatives of the communist and democratic parties, will have to raise the banner and carry it forward. . . . There is nobody else to raise it."

Parliament and Popular Representation

To take hold of the institutions of power and propaganda which hitherto only the bourgeoisie has had the facility to handle freely and upon which it has placed so heavily the stamp of its own way of life—it is precisely because of this tremendous creative task that the working class must see every contradiction in capitalist rule today. It is in this light that we must strive to overcome any indifference to the fate of Parliament and the array of social rights and political practices which collectively constitute what we term Parliamentary democracy.

In the historical experience of the Labour movement we are of course aware of the compromising effects of Parliamentary politics, and even today there is a very natural hostility in the militant sections of the Labour movement to the Parliamentary system. The conceptions of *The British Road to Socialism*, however, lead to quite a new understanding, because they join the struggles of today with the revolutionary traditions of the working class. The revolutionary parliamentarianism which is there advanced is as different as chalk from cheese when it comes to comparison with the reformist approach to the same subject, Revolutionary, because in Parliament and local government is seen the possibility of focusing

the demands of the working people, of carrying forward the class struggle and opening up a new stage when the working people can use their power to take the initiative in using state and civic power for the needs of the great mass of the people. That is why it is always necessary to speak not of using Parliament but of *transforming* it into something new, something infinitely more democratic than that which exists at present.

The fact that Parliament today occupies a position of great prestige in the political life of the country is something that is important and should not be obscured, despite the low level to which leading parliamentarians frequently reduce Parliamentary activity. This prestige belongs to Parliament not because it is the body representative of the people, but because, albeit imperfectly, it does represent something of the popular feeling and because even within its present confines it does permit change and development. This in itself would hardly be enough were it not that Parliament and the system of rights upon which it rests has evolved over hundreds of years and no attempt to replace it or dispose of it has been successful.

Parliament and Revolution

Viewing the span of history from the breaking down of feudalism to the high-water mark of capitalist development, the evolution of Parliament has been in a progressive direction. The centre of power in the Parliamentary system has moved from the Monarchy (or King in Council) and the House of Lords, to the Commons. In its origins, the Commons, as its name implies, was very much the inferior part of the constitution, its members being summoned in the early days from among the smaller landowners of the shires and the leading townspeople of the boroughs. Today the Commons is from the constitutional point of view the sovereign law-making body of the country with unlimited powers—something without parallel in other capitalist countries. The evolution of Parliament in such a manner could not have taken place but for the fact that it was subjected to popular pressure and compelled to make concessions.

In its rudimentary form, the Commons in contradistinction to the Great Council (future House of Lords), began as early as the fourteenth century to show what later became its dominant feature: namely, that as the body convened to consent to the levying of taxes by the central government and required to assist the carrying through of government, it had also to possess the political right to represent the opinion of the taxpayers and to exert that opinion when the government resolved upon new legislative or

administrative acts. To secure an ample measure of consent, especially that of the rising wealthier elements in society, the state had to accept the fact (though it was by no means through an even process of royal assent that the right was won) that the Commons would possess some of the legal authority which it was in the power of the Monarchy to devolve upon it.

The English Revolution of the seventeenth century showed that Parliament, far from being swept to one side by the rise of a new class and the rupture in social relations that ensued, became in fact the dramatic centre of the expression of the new forces. The merchants, manufacturers and capitalist farmers, denied the power and influence that they saw as necessary to their further advance, framed their demands, economic at first and later unquestionably political, in relation to Parliament. The authority of Parliament became the constitutional issue of the day around which the class struggle raged.

The new class organised around Parliament seized on the limited representative basis that it offered, and found it most effective for presenting their demands in a manner that attracted the attention of society as a whole. They hammered at the contradiction between a state in the hands of a centralised Monarchy supported in power by church and aristocracy and the popular support in the towns and some parts of the countryside for their demands, which would if realised liberate trade and greatly increase the wealth of the country.

Hitherto the Commons had been inferior in power to the Monarchy and the Lords; the Speaker had been the King's nominee, and its legislation tolerable only if it was acceptable to the crown.

The important change took place in the first stages of the revolution when the struggle for power was at its most critical and before the Monarchy was done away with. The Speaker was made the servant of the Commons, standing committees were set up, one of which became the leading body counterposed against the Privy Council whose composition was a prerogative power of the monarch. It is true that the King tried to rule for eleven years without Parliament and when that only further increased the momentum of the popular movement, he sought to use the army in Ireland and the army of the Scots nobles to crush the leadership of the movement that had been triumphantly returned to Westminster. The citizens of London had no hesitation in arming themselves to defend Parliament.

The initiative once captured, Parliament legislated to strike at the roots of the monarchical power. The episcopacy was abolished and elected

presbyteries brought into being. The church and the army were taken out of the hands of the aristocracy and reformed, and the great estates of the King were confiscated (without compensation) and sold. Local government was reformed and a new foreign policy adopted to strengthen the position of English trade and manufactures. Parliament itself was declared the sovereign legal body of the land, the House of Lords abolished, the Monarchy disposed of. This revolution was so thoroughgoing that it was able to survive the acid test of every revolution—to crush reaction by force, and establish full mastery of the situation.

The revolution in certain respects it is true stopped half way, but in that it was no different from bourgeois revolutions generally. The settlements of 1660, 1688, and 1703 restored certain of the aristocratic features of the constitution as a check upon the Commons. Surgical operations on the House of Lords and the Monarchy remain to this day as tasks left over from the English Revolution. But the revolution established the Commons as the principal means of communication between the government and the people, and each significant social upheaval in the development of capitalism only served to confirm more strongly the responsible role of Parliament. The centre of gravity of the political system came to reside more and more in Parliament, and the Reform Act of 1832 established once and for all that the government had to have an integral connection with the Commons and could not maintain itself if it lost its majority support in the Commons. For reasons of historical development the leaders of the political parties and the government itself come from the body of Parliament, and this further strengthens its power and influence.

Industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century carried the bourgeois revolution a stage further, but, unlike their forerunners of the seventeenth century, the new class were unable to turn back or halt the movement for democracy conducted by the class which they exploited and whose services they had gladly used against the landed aristocracy. The Chartists, who focused their agitation on Parliament, were described by Marx as the true English democrats. Working class agitation rose to new heights; the first big victory was the Ten Hours Act of 1847, secured, as Marx observed, by improving upon the split between the landlords and mill-owners, and a revenge on the latter for the Poor Law of 1834. This victory gave new strength to the radical and working class tradition of seeing in Parliament a place where democratic demands should be voiced and pressed home by demonstrations outside its walls.

The ruling class it is true defeated the Chartists all along the line in 1848. Yet this did not halt the process, and in the late fifties and in the sixties petitions to Parliament grew in number and volume. Twenty years after the defeat of the Chartists, the bourgeoisie had come to a position where it could not establish stable rule unless it would take the skilled sections of the working class into an alliance with itself and install also their representatives in Parliament alongside those of the bourgeoisie.

Capitalist Democracy

“The working class should be brought within the pale of the Constitution,” said Mr. Gladstone, architect of a class alliance between the industrial capitalist class and the skilled sections of the working class. As early as 1858 when he made the above pronouncement on the bourgeois constitution, he had seen that this new type of alliance must replace the old alliance of industrial capitalism with the landowners which was breaking up and could provide no stability for the bourgeois state. Backed up by economic concessions to the skilled workers, the ruling class made an all-out bid to bind the working class to itself. Of the bewitching influence of political democracy, the right accorded to the working class to claim an interest in the activities of capitalist politicians locked in mortal struggle over legislative acts which concerned only the inheritance of the middling rich or some issue of that order; of this stimulating fare, the working class was invited to take its fill. In the minds of Mr. Gladstone and his friends who comprised the new “millocracy” this was a firm guarantee against any repetitions of Chartism or any form of independent working class action.

But universal suffrage, as Engels reminded the working class, was “no more than an index of the maturity of the working class”. Even before Gladstone departed from the scene the high-water mark of the alliance to which he had given his life’s work had been reached. In fact altogether new elements were coming into British political life. The ruling class at home became the class of imperialist plunder abroad.

Liberalism has served its purpose; it was not equipped for empire building, and neither was it able any longer to retain within the limits of its philosophy the aspirations of the working class which was again turning to socialist ideas. These shortcomings of Liberalism emerged almost together in the late ’eighties, and with a rapid re-organisation of its forces, the ruling class with indecent haste and no show of ceremony kicked Gladstonian liberalism out of the door and

installed the new Tory democracy. Chauvinism and all the modern forms of corruption in politics and propaganda became the stock-in-trade of ruling class parties from that time, and the efforts that it made to win over and corrupt wide sections of the working people rendered intelligible by the more open and vicious use of the mailed fist of the capitalist state against the militant working class. This really is the modern period in the political history of this country, and indeed the speeches and tactics of the Chamberlain Tories and the Liberal Imperialists led by Rosebery have a most modern flavour.

The total effect of all this has to be weighed up. Henceforth, and there is no escaping the fact, in Britain the word democracy has a certain common meaning, no matter who uses it. It always conjures up an attitude towards Parliament and the system of rights upon which it rests. The working class has itself contributed to this. Parliamentary democracy is not something that has been put over on us by the bourgeoisie. The working class, in entering what was beyond question a Parliament dominated by the representatives of the bourgeoisie, embarked upon a certain course. It took the bourgeoisie at its face value, and inevitably it was taken in by the bourgeoisie, even over and above the desires for class compromise which actively animated the hearts and minds of the Liberal-Labour leaders. The consequences of playing this sort of game are well known for that period of history, but it is nevertheless the case that the working class did make an over-all advance in the late nineteenth and early part of this century. It had learnt a political lesson, it had emancipated itself from the leadership of the bourgeois political parties, and as a reward for its hard work and suffering it has established its claim to settle the future of Parliamentary democracy. The future and fate of Parliament had from the entrance of the working class into Parliamentary struggle ceased to be the sole right of the bourgeoisie, which the latter had inherited from the landed aristocracy and meant to use for the maintenance of privilege and power in society.

Parliamentary democratic rights are not some sort of rules which the bourgeoisie in its cleverness has devised, and which the working class in its expediency takes advantage of. Parliamentary democracy is not a pure and unsullied system but it is a part of the struggle for democracy, for the emancipation of the working people. The working class has to recognise its inheritance and use it, otherwise it becomes lifeless and is lost. Parliamentary democracy today has vitality in it still, it is capable of being joined to the struggle for social justice and freedom which millions are seeking to raise high if they could but feel the

confidence of a class that knows that it carries destiny in its hands. The working class movement retains a position where it can give a new life to democracy and to the people assembled in Parliament. Only the shortcomings in its own political consciousness prevent it from raising a great battle for democracy, only its own one-sided reading of the nature of bourgeois democracy and its willingness to let the ruling class use Parliament to choke every clear strong expression of the movement—only these limitations prevent the working class from taking the floor in Parliament (as Gallacher on his own used to) to arraign the ruling class before the people of this country for being a fraud and a sham when it speaks of democracy. Limitations to Parliament there are, but it is not these which at this time are the brake on progress.

The working class must claim its right, having endured what is hollow and demagogic in democracy as practised by the bourgeoisie, to use its position, to realise all the democratic aspirations associated with Parliamentary democracy—and this by completing the democratic tendencies in bourgeois parliamentary democracy in the early stages of the socialist revolution.

The use to which Parliament has been put to mislead the working class is well known, and that it is only by the grace of the Fabians (who as good Gladstonian radicals took over the struggle where the Grand Old Man had to lay it down) that the monopoly capitalist state was able to survive the tremendous upsurge from 1911 to 1926. The emergence of an opportunist leadership, using Parliament against the militant working class was an inevitable development.

The Imperialist State

The change in the fundamental attributes of capitalism into their opposites is a feature of imperialism. The transformation of free enterprise capitalism into monopoly capitalism is the basic material change which distinguishes these two epochs of capitalist development. Monopoly capitalism no longer stands for the political life, or perhaps more correctly, can no longer afford to present itself as preferring the political life of the pre-imperialist era. The enormous strengthening of the state, especially in its military and repressive aspects, could mean only that the adherence of the ruling class to bourgeois democracy and bourgeois national independence become more and more open to doubt. In such circumstances the defence of democracy depends on the initiative of the working class and becomes a most important part of the general struggle against imperialism.

The state under monopoly capitalism has been strengthened for three reasons. Firstly, the aggressive foreign policy of imperialism has required a military type of state. Secondly, for the defence of capitalism against the powerful assaults of the working class movements. Thirdly, because the centralisation of the productive forces under monopoly capitalism, and the operations of monopoly capitalism, led to the direct harnessing of the authority of the state to promote the interests of monopoly capitalism.

These developments inevitably changed the relationship of the Parliamentary system and the monopoly capitalist state in its administrative and materialistic aspect. The contradictions between the two have become more apparent and of very considerable significance. While maintaining of course the unceasing propaganda appeal concerning the free institutions of capitalism etc., the capitalist class has in fact moved in the direction of undermining Parliamentary and democratic rights.

It is an interesting thing that the "New Fabian" thinkers are just discovering that the Parliamentary system is the most democratic in the world. They find in it an extraordinary elasticity which permits it to contain all the most acute stresses and strains which the iniquitous system of capitalism gives rise to. On the other hand it is a puzzling thing that nearly all of the orthodox, and of course conservative, experts on the constitution of this country are pretty well of one mind in agreeing that the rights and powers of Parliament have declined very considerably and much of its actions are little more than a formality, made empty by the overwhelming power of the cabinet system. John Strachey, who has so recently summed up the state of contemporary capitalism, tries to define what Parliamentary democracy is. He finds it very difficult. First he states that it cannot be defined. Later on he informs us that the "first worth of representative institutions lies not so much in what they can accomplish as in what they can prevent. They are in the first place safety devices; they are the steering wheel and the brakes of the vehicle of government rather than its engine". He finds this justifiable because as he says the average voter does not know everything and does not by any means always know the best. But he knows one thing, he knows how much he can stand. And when he can stand no more he chooses an "alternative government" which will in the main have won his support by promising *not* to do the things which have become displeasing to him in the existing government.

This startling analysis, which seems to be about

the best the ex-Minister for War can achieve after cogitating over the accumulated experience of several decades of Parliamentary activity, leads eventually—for those who have not yet arrived at the point when they can stand no more—to a final definition of democracy. The essential feature of democracy he tells us is "the diffusion of power through the community". He agrees that it is not possible, though it would be ideal, for everyone to have just the same amount of power as everyone else, but he reassures us with what is surely one of the most pregnant thoughts on democracy for all time—"that it is important to realise that in the multi-dimensional geometry of politics the democratic line approaches, even if only asymptotically, the curve of ideal liberty". As capitalism goes back on capitalist democracy so this most obsequious and sophisticated defender of capitalism puts himself out to make history by writing the most tortuous defence of democracy that has been written for many a long day. To achieve his remarkable conclusions he even forgets the flaws that the Fabians of thirty and more years ago saw. Sidney Webb wrote as early as 1925:

"The result is that under the guise of government by the majority of the people acting through its elected representatives, we now have the dictatorship of a small group of men or of one man exercised through a subservient party majority of more or less tied members, and an obedient and efficient hierarchy of unparalled magnitude."

Webb was fresh from the experience of sitting in the first Labour Cabinet when he wrote that illuminating comment. Before the Select Committee enquiring into Parliamentary procedure in 1931, Lloyd George said: "Parliament has no control over the Executive, it is a pure fiction." Christopher Hollis, a recent and well known Tory M.P., made the following comments after he had voluntarily resigned from Parliamentary politics:

"The parties were originally formed in order to support certain policies. Today it seems that the parties exist, and then desperately rack their brains to think of a policy which will justify them going on existing. And yet in spite of that party discipline has grown not laxer but stronger. The parties with every day come to differ more and more about less and less. Almost all of the public activities of the private members are, then, little more than a waste of time. They may be a necessary farce, but they are certainly a farce."

Hollis's somewhat cynical account does draw attention to the fact that the parliamentary parties which have the closest control over the development of Parliament have not been of the mind to get to grips with a situation whereby the

government is permitted to extend its power with each passing year, and beyond the control of Parliament or any other form of popular influence. Parliament in such circumstances becomes cut off and isolated by virtue of the fact that all the decisions are taken outside Parliament.

The form of a thing sometimes counts for a great deal. Beyond question the capitalist class have found the refusal of their forefathers to have anything to do with a written constitution, or any system of constitutional review, to have been a wise decision indeed. With no decisions taken, and with so little noise that they have not even disturbed the dreams of John Strachey and his fellow Fabians, something like a revolution—if that is not a misuse of the word—has taken place in the political system. Its object has been to render Parliamentary democracy a tame and harmless way of conducting political activity.

The Fight for Democracy

Significant steps have been made since the First World War to strengthen the state power against the working class. The Police Act of 1919, the Emergency Powers Act of 1921, and the Public Order Act of 1936, coupled with the practice of using troops against industrial strikes, have been the major developments in this field. At present the Tory Government is seeking to refurbish the House of Lords, and no doubt in its long-sighted wisdom it is priming its powers for the day when a socialist government tries to enact some particularly obnoxious piece of legislation. Even the system of universal suffrage, the much vaunted hallmark of democracy, is discovered to be a good deal less democratic than it might be when the electoral system is subject to close scrutiny. All attempts to reform it have been firmly resisted. Despite the fact that the justification for this, as put forward by capitalist apologists, is that the present system promotes a two-party legislature with a clear alternative always before the people, no government since 1906 has been elected on a majority vote.

The truth is that from every angle the period is one in which monopoly capitalism through its control of the state has set in motion a process of restriction and distortion of Parliamentary democracy.

The tendency of the ruling class to turn away from democracy has not been an isolated phenomenon, but a logical development of its world-wide movement to hold back the progress of mankind. National self-determination, peace and the advance to socialism have become the platform of the forward movement in the era of imperialism. The counter-offensive of the ruling classes has

rendered it impossible for them to respect the democratic rights which had been won at an earlier stage. In the inter-war period, fascism, the precise opposite of democracy, was the resort of monopoly capitalism in many countries of Western Europe. The defeat of fascism in the Second World War and the emergence of a stronger socialist sector supported by the tremendous national liberation movements against imperialism, led to a change of front on the part of monopoly capitalism—but essentially the same tendencies are at work. The aggressive alliance of the imperialist countries against the socialist world is but the form of the alliance against the advance of the people and the fight for socialism. Today, imperialism has made the issue of peace or war the supreme issue, and the drive to war holds back every limited local advance of the people, and threatens with every new upsurge of the popular movement to pull down the whole of society into ruins.

In these circumstances the struggle for the broad unity of the people and the defence of democracy has become the strategy of the working class movement in its path to socialism. The experience of fascism made plain the necessity for the leading sections of the working class to strive to overcome the divisions in the working class and to find a broad basis of action which would unite not only the working class but with it also the petty bourgeoisie, and the capitalist parties which were similarly facing an onslaught. The policy of the united front, advanced at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, is still in essence the strategy that will make it possible for the working class to bring about the defeat of monopoly capitalism. The onset of fascism made it clear that the conditions for the proletarian revolution had substantially changed as compared with the period following the October Revolution. The new situation raised with fresh urgency the question of the unity between the Communist and the Social Democratic Parties, and the winning of new allies for the working class among the peasantry, the petit-bourgeoisie, the professional workers and the small capitalists. This remains the objective today, and it gives a most important emphasis to the struggle for democratic rights. Speaking at the Seventh World Congress, Dimitroff stated:

“Some say that the struggle for democratic rights may divert the workers from the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship. It may not be amiss to recall what Lenin said on this question: ‘It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolu-

tion, or obscure or overshadow it etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, a consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.’”

Dimitrov added:

“But in order to be able to link up the struggle of the working class for socialism, it is necessary first and foremost to discard any cut and dried approach to the question of the defence of bourgeois democracy.”

Parliament and the Broad Programme

The future transformation of Parliament is of course bound up with the nature of the class struggle, the Communist Party in deciding that Parliamentary democracy has to be consistently fought for, and developed by stages of transformation into socialist democracy, directly challenges the conception, expressed in their different ways by the reformist and sectarian tendencies in the Labour movement, that Parliament is the possession of the bourgeoisie and can in the last analysis serve only their interests. It joins the heritage of past struggles to the future political development in Britain by stating that Parliament is capable *not simply of furthering the struggle for socialism, but that it can become the instrument of the rule of the working class, and the turning out of power of the capitalist class.* Hence it is that the question of the role of Parliament becomes a major issue of struggle.

If there are certain hazards and disadvantages in the Parliamentary road they are only the expression of the obstacles that have to be overcome in the development of unity in the working class movement and the development of unity between the working class and its allies. In another sense also these difficulties of a Parliamentary road are the obstacles of sectarianism and narrowness in the Labour movement. Too long has the working class been divided by the bourgeoisie and not least upon the issue of how to deal with bourgeois democracy. One of the not unimportant questions to be kept in mind when tackling this problem is the relation of the standpoint on democracy to the question of unity in the working class and how to arrive at an approach which will unite the Labour movement on its long-term aims, and so enable it to wrest the power of Parliament with all its powerful ideological appeal from out of the hands of the ruling class.

Parliament has a most powerful ideological appeal to the middle sections of society and this follows from the historical associations of the

English middle class with the early struggles for Parliamentary democracy. Democratic rights were the product of the age of reason, when as Engels expresses it: “Reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie”. Justice, equality before the law, these and other one-time proclamations of the bourgeoisie are still remembered by the middle class and will remain as something specially vital (however unreal in some circumstances) to their understanding of political progress. The middle class will strengthen its ideology as it is drawn into the general antagonisms of the small group of exploiters and the great mass of exploited (which includes much of its own number). But this will be a complicated and involved development which requires patience on the part of the working class and at all times a close regard for strengthening the progressive ideas of the middle class, especially where they take the form of attachments to institutions which the bourgeoisie is anxious to throw overboard.

Yet Lenin’s contention that it is the many-sidedness of the struggle that counts must be kept in mind when speaking of Parliament. Parliamentary struggle is not and will not be the only form of struggle. Only the reformists preach that, and for them it is understandable for there is nothing they fear so much as the mass movement—hence frenzied opposition to any movement to unite Parliamentary activity with mass activity in industry and in the localities. However, it is especially this method of uniting Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary agitation that make the most of the power of Parliament and give a real authority to the representatives of the working class seated inside Parliament. The whole constitution and structure of the Labour Party make this kind of development especially difficult, and the endeavour of the rank and file of the party to put an end to the secrecy in which the Parliamentary leadership of the party works, and to the constitutional right of the latter to disregard the decisions of the annual conference of the Labour Party, is indistinguishable from the general struggle for a new approach to democratic action.

Dismantling the State Machine

When the working class and its allies have put into Parliament a socialist Labour and Communist majority, and brought into being a socialist government, the question will arise of bringing the apparatus of the state machine created by monopoly capitalism under the control of the new forces, and setting about the task of laying the basis of a socialist state. The distinctions between Parliament and state must therefore not be lost sight of in a period of transfer of power. The

outstanding considerations that will determine the speed of the change-over of power will be the necessity of preventing the capitalist class from precipitating a crisis on the one hand, and the task of further cementing the alliance of the working class and its allies, on the other. Clearly there is an interaction of complex factors here which would make a blueprint of a transfer of power quite useless.

Yet many questions will arise in the course of the transfer of power which will require special treatment and which are already brought forward in their essential features in the *British Road to Socialism*. The connection between the struggles of today and the changes that will eventually occur when a change of power takes place is always asserting itself. Changing the functions of the state under a socialist government will not for example mean in the majority of cases, outside the top personnel, changing the personnel working in the state apparatus. The actual struggles, especially of those at present working in the departments of state, directed always to unity with the industrial working class will more than anything determine the responsiveness of these same departments of state to the policy of a socialist government. There will be personnel who will have to be displaced, but contrary to what some people say this will be a tremendous constructive act by the working class movement and reveal its own capabilities for shouldering the responsibility of seeing that the complex apparatus of the modern state works in the interest of the people—and with efficiency!

The authority of Parliament itself will of course need to be strengthened by certain acts. The House of Lords, the Monarchy and other adjuncts of capitalist rule which have nothing in common

with democracy will be removed. This should not present such a big problem. The relation of Parliament and the central government to local government and the civil service constitutes a much more complex problem requiring detailed discussion. But much the most important and urgent problem of all will be the controlling hand of a socialist government over the national economy—both its public and private sectors. It is very likely that it will be in this field rather than in that of political rights that the sharpest questions of the freedom of individual action will raise themselves.

While in certain special cases some inroad into the capitalist state may be made in the period before a socialist government these are all questions which will only be resolved in practice after a change of power. But the importance of the socialist programme of the future in the ideological struggle for socialism at this stage is clearly of supreme importance. There must be a constant broadening of the struggle. Today the overwhelming potential of the Labour and trade union movement is held back and restricted in its expression to a narrowed and distorted economic conception of political action. The purpose of this is to sever off and isolate the emerging mass movement and prevent it from joining up with and influencing the leadership of the organised Labour movement. A revolutionary approach which sees the vital connection between the mass movement and the role of Parliament in the battle against monopoly capitalism is vitally necessary at this time. As soon as the possibility arises for satisfying the interests of the mass of the people at present held down, this possibility will be achieved in the establishment of a socialist government determined to use the state against monopoly capitalism.

Discussion on Philosophy

Philosophers, the People and the Party

Joan Simon

"There's no existing form of society good enough for the philosophical nature; with the result that it gets warped and altered. . . . If only it could find the ideal society to match its own excellence, then its truly divine quality would appear clearly, and all other characters and ways of life stand revealed as merely human."

"... 'With all this in mind', I said, '... we felt bound in all honesty, though with some trepidation, to say that there would never be a perfect state of society . . . until some chance compelled this minority of uncorrupted philosophers, now called useless, to take a hand in politics, willy-nilly, and compelled society to listen to them.' (Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI, § 497, § 499.)

IN his article "Philosophy, Criticism and Progress" (*Marxism Today*, October, 1957) Maurice Cornforth does not in fact call on Plato. But the conclusion he reaches (without any apparent trepidation) is as near as nothing that which Socrates is made to voice in the second quotation above; while some of his implied criticisms of existing societies call to mind the first.

At the outset he outlines the conclusion reached by Engels seventy years ago. Engels pointed out that, with the development of the positive sciences, the role of philosophy ceases to be that of speculating about all aspects of the world—or about the "true end" of knowledge, "ultimate reality", and so on; instead philosophy is limited to investigating "the theory of the laws of the thought process itself, logic and dialectics".¹

But, this conclusion once stated, Cornforth's subsequent argument is framed to evade or transcend it. And it culminates with the proposition that it is the philosopher's task to formulate "values", above the heads of—or as an intermediary for—the people; that it is he who must tell parties and states what ends to serve and the ways in which they should work towards these.

¹ Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of the Classical German Philosophy (London, 1947), p. 70.

I am no philosopher, as will no doubt appear. But as a Marxist I take strong exception to this conclusion and to many of the arguments which lead up to it. There is only space here to deal briefly with some of these.

A False Premise

In the first place Cornforth's whole thesis is founded on a false premise. He opens by saying that philosophy is not concerned with any specific aspect of reality but rather "tries to answer certain kinds of questions" about all aspects of reality. The chief characteristic of these philosophical questions is that they all spring from "a certain kind of criticism of current ideas". In order to criticise one must first "doubt everything" and have "freedom of thought".

What is it that philosophy criticises? "The general assumptions underlying the current ideologies of society" and also "common sense". By criticising "tradition and common sense" in this way, philosophy arrives at a "world outlook".

How does Cornforth reach this first stage in his argument from which all else flows? Descartes said it is necessary to doubt everything; Hegel said freedom of thought is the first condition of philosophy; even the medieval schoolmen raised questions about the dogma of the Church.

Now Marx did not say that "philosophers have only criticised the world"; had he done so the force of his counterposing remark—"the point is to change it"—would have been very much less. What Marx did say is that philosophers have only "interpreted the world differently". This is a much more accurate analysis than that of Cornforth which is based on a few selected quotations.

The medieval schoolmen certainly never regarded freedom of thought as a condition of philosophic reasoning; nor, by any means, did they doubt everything. In general their terms of reference were to build up from two apparently mutually exclusive elements—the philosophy of the pagan world of antiquity and Christian dogma—a consistent world

view which upheld the latter; which expressed, that is, in terms of scholastic theology, the ideological outlook of feudalism. True, in the process, and in dependence upon the changing forms of the class struggle, some came to conclusions which challenged the dogma of the Church, in opposition to others who stood on their heads to defend it; but that is another thing.

Lack of Historical Approach

Later philosophies were also concerned above all to *systematise* knowledge, to arrange it in such a way that it made up a consistent body of thought; or rather later philosophers, for with the advent of bourgeois social relations it was now individuals who advanced a "world outlook".

This makes sense of Engels's statement: that Hegel, by the very splendour and extent of his "system", effectively brought philosophy (as it had been understood until then) to an end. In constructing a consistent system of this kind a philosopher, rather than endlessly asking questions, tried to iron out contradictions, to achieve an entirely logical argument at all points.

But, said Engels, if no contradictions remained we should have arrived at absolute truth; world history would be at an end. Of course philosophers cannot define the course and end of human knowledge in this way; this is "accomplished by the entire human race in its progressive development". Once one realises this

"one leaves aside 'absolute truth' which is unattainable along this path or by any single individual; instead one pursues attainable relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by means of dialectical thinking."¹

It can be seen, therefore, that the very foundation of Cornforth's argument is in question. Philosophy has not been just criticism.

If, instead of making superficial judgments about "philosophy in general", Cornforth had first defined bourgeois philosophy in the light of historical materialism, and then defined Marxism likewise, he would have started off on quite another foot. As indeed he did in an article written some years ago which opened with the words: "Marxism presents a philosophy of a new kind, differing in fundamental respects from all previous philosophies" while taking its departure "from the standpoint reached in previous philosophy."²

Imprecision of Thought

The whole of the remaining argument goes astray in so far as it is based on a false premise. But it is

¹ *loc. cit.*, p. 18.

² "Marxism and the Development of Philosophy", *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 102.

worth investigating some of the reasons why it reaches the given conclusion.

The first thing to note about it is the number of generalities and, in spite of all that is said about philosophy's preoccupation with logic and reasoning, the imprecision of thought. This is inevitable because the argument does not start from any clear philosophical standpoint to examine questions of philosophy, nor has it any historical context, but begins, as we have seen, by defining "philosophy in general" in the void.

First, then, we are told that philosophy is criticism. All philosophy—that is, a few dogmatists and apologists apart—is criticism. Later we learn that there is "philosophical criticism which in effect attacks the whole tradition of the older, capitalist order and works to create the new tradition of socialist society, and the opposite criticism"; i.e. bourgeois philosophy and socialist philosophy, usually called here "socialist ideology".

Using this later knowledge to clarify the original definition of what philosophy criticises, we arrive at the following: "socialist ideology" criticises the "general assumptions underlying the current ideologies of society" and common sense, in order to arrive at a world outlook. Is this true of Marxism?

Or, to take another aspect of the same argument, "socialist ideology" (a) criticises the capitalist tradition, i.e. bourgeois ideology, (b) helps to create the developing socialist tradition, by criticism. It follows that a primary need for the development of "socialist ideology" is that it should take into account as much questioning and criticism as possible. Indeed, its advance will be "the surer and more fertile the more, in developing the principles of socialism, socialists are aware of and draw conclusions from all the critical questioning of the philosophy of our time"; i.e. the more they pay attention to bourgeois ideology. Is this proposition altogether consistent and correct?

Philosophy and the Class Struggle

It will be seen that Cornforth makes no fundamental distinction here between Marxism and philosophy in general. The corollary of this is that, leaving fundamental Marxist theses aside, he goes on to operate with what may be called bourgeois-liberal categories, such as "human values", "general progress" and so on. Though he attempts to invest these with a Marxist content, the attempt inevitably fails so that in the end the Marxism gets left out.

The argument relating to philosophy, the class struggle and progress provides a good example of this. It may be outlined as follows:

Marx showed that history is the history of class struggles—that is, progress takes place through the class struggle. This provides the historian with a key to assessing events; he can not only report

them but also seek their causes and seek also to evaluate their results in terms of "general human progress".

Philosophy itself contributes to general human progress as an element in the class struggle; a philosopher, that is, makes his contribution through his association with some class. This association is, however, "active, creative"; the philosopher "does not merely repeat and systematise the already spontaneously formed beliefs and aims of a class, but by the questions he asks and the criticisms he makes helps form those beliefs and aims, which could not take the form they do otherwise".

What is the measure of human progress in this sense? Its measure is "the growth of productive technique and knowledge". From the Stone Age to today such progress can be objectively measured; it is "an ascertainable fact". But there is more to progress than this; if it is to be something "desirable to strive for" then "what evidently counts is not technique and knowledge in themselves, but the way of life they enable people to enjoy". Here "moral rather than factual considerations" arise with which philosophy must be concerned. In fact it is the task of philosophy to "help progress" both by advancing knowledge and technique and "contributing to the formulation and realisation of a way of life" whereby people can "enjoy the fruits of progress".

There are two very significant terms in this passage. The first is "spontaneously formed". Apparently the working class arrives at ideas and aims not in the process of the class struggle but "spontaneously", being forced to wait for precise formulations from philosophers before these ideas and aims can truly be formed and become operative; i.e. the machine waiting to be put into action by a motive force.

Thus though the class struggle finds mention as the means through which "general human progress" takes place and, too, as the source of philosophical thinking, this is a formal adjunct to the argument rather than an integral part of it. To look back carefully at an earlier train of thought is, in fact, to find that it has already been left aside there; the argument has really been continued logically from the first proposition. "If . . . philosophy arises from criticising and questioning tradition", tradition itself being the superstructure formed on the basis of property and class divisions, then philosophy ultimately arises from "a certain instability in (these) social relations and a tendency for them to be changed in various ways".

It is here that the class struggle is, in effect, eased out in favour of "a tendency" for social relations to be changed; and to omit the class struggle in this way is to forget dialectics in favour of a purely formal proposition. Hence the subse-

quent lapse into metaphysical reasoning. It is in the light of this that "general human progress" is also eventually defined as consisting of two distinct elements: (1) the advance of knowledge and technique; (2) the creation of an enjoyable way of life.

It is here that the second significant term occurs; as if to underline how mechanical this conception is Cornforth actually uses a key metaphysical formulation. He writes "technique and knowledge *in themselves*" [my italics. J. S.] do not make progress something desirable to strive for; they are only a means to the end of creating a way of life people may enjoy.

Here it becomes necessary to ask what "people"? What is all this "general progress" of "mankind"? Since the whole argument seems by implication to be a criticism of what is, or is not, done in socialist countries, let us look at them.

A Metaphysical Argument

The first obvious point is that the advance of knowledge does not occur in a vacuum, apart from people and their way of life. It takes place when young people go to the university, everyone can buy books cheaply, the family's radio and television are fundamentally educative, scientists have access to the latest scientific equipment, scholars to libraries, and so on.

When all children stay in school until seventeen they gain access to the masterpieces of world literature, to the history of philosophy, to scientific method; they have time to develop the ability to read widely and with discrimination, to learn from what they read, to think critically. This acquisition of knowledge fundamentally changes the people's way of life, spurs novelists and artists to new heights, increases opportunities for enjoyment and guarantees further changes in the direction people want.

Again, the advancement of technique only occurs when people invent new machines and make them. In so doing men humanise nature, and human powers are, as it were, incorporated in the new machines in an objective form. This itself advances men's ideas, provides a new point of departure for thought, invention, and so on. This is the very stuff of the process of change, the changing of nature and the changing of man through society; this is how new values are created, of all kinds, material and spiritual.

The mastery of knowledge and technique, and the mastery of nature by their means, afford people the keenest enjoyment. When thousands of young people went to Siberia recently, with nothing but their enthusiasm, skill and the essential equipment for building houses and factories, they did not consider that they might not enjoy the "way of

life" the virgin lands had to offer. They went to create a way of life, themselves; and have done so successfully enough, though it is doubtful whether any philosophers were there to point the way. This is progress; material and human progress inseparably connected under socialism.

Ends and Means

It will be seen that in his treatment of this question Cornforth is not at all clear about the relation of means and ends; nor therefore well qualified to give advice on this matter. His next main point, that it is the role of philosophy to do just this, arises from this very confusion. Having *separated* knowledge from the people's way of life, he postulates that particular persons, specifically concerned with the laws of thought—the philosophers—can and must formulate for ordinary people the values they should accept and the ways in which to work for them. The people must be told what is ultimately good for them on the one hand and the party and state told how to serve this end on the other.

Leaving aside the superb arrogance of this conception, the underlying idea seems to be that people may not "be given" enough material things—houses, shall we say; nor, more important, spiritual things such as freedom of thought and criticism. A state, a party, stands in the way, pursuing its own ends to the detriment of the people's needs and aspirations.

What is to guarantee that this will not happen? Will training more philosophers to criticise and formulate desirable ends do the trick? Of course not; philosophers have been doing the latter, under capitalism, for centuries—indeed they have been at it since the time of Plato.

On the other hand an essential guarantee is to bring to the widest sections of the people the tools and the opportunities whereby they can make themselves felt, judge, criticise and correct; primarily by strengthening working class and popular organisations and their scope of action and by extending education of all kinds, not least in Marxism itself.

One of the conclusions I should draw from this train of argument is that a primary task of socialist philosophers is to examine how Marxism can best be *taught*. In some socialist countries in my (admittedly limited) experience, such teaching can be dismally inept. This in turn is probably because philosophers have not made it their first concern; because they are not themselves clear about the scope and content of their subject, its place and significance in the general scheme of things, and are out of touch with developing popular needs.

It is unlikely that this position will be rectified

until philosophers recognise that another of their main tasks is to apply criticism to themselves.

Another questionable formulation which occurs throughout Cornforth's article is socialist "ideology". This is not a very happy term; Engels defined ideology as "occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own law".¹

True, when arguing that philosophy must clarify social purposes, Cornforth underlines that these "do not *originate* from philosophical thought"; but he also consistently emphasises that they cannot become operative until philosophers formulate them; that the views of philosophers are "formative elements in class ideology", that people cannot strive for social purposes, least of all realise them "without the guidance of critical philosophical discussion".

Ideology and Marxism

Here it is discussion from above, among philosophers, that seems to be intended and doubts are not allayed by the proviso that the philosophers will be concerned "with basing and justifying our ideas on knowledge of the actual conditions and needs of mankind". For how does "mankind" make its needs known to the philosophers? No indication is given. The people's organisations, parties, are mentioned only as objects of criticism for philosophers, are implicitly condemned for their tendency to become ultimate "ends". We are left to suppose that the philosophers diagnose "mankind's needs" for themselves, in the light of their philosophical questioning of tradition, i.e. in their own closed world.

By all these means we arrive at the end point that philosophy has a twofold task; it is not, as suggested by Engels, concerned only with logic and dialectics but "also and finally questions of 'value', " as questions relating to "the formulation of human purposes". In the final sentences Marxism receives direct mention; it is itself an outlook "concerning the ends of human life and the means to achieve them" and must, rather than merely repeating propositions, be "developed as such".

But Cornforth does not develop the Marxist outlook in this article. On the contrary.

The key point about Marxism, what makes it different from all preceding philosophies, is that it is grounded in the class struggle; that it brings philosophical techniques to the working class movement, informs day-to-day work, raises it to new levels, in sum enables the working class to formulate its aims and policies scientifically. In fact, as Cornforth himself has often pointed out, Marxism has a revolutionary as well as a scientific character;

¹ *loc. cit.*, p. 65.

it is "the militant class philosophy of the proletariat".

It was precisely the advent of this philosophy—growing out of Marx and Engels's painstaking examination of the laws governing the development of society, of the internal working of the class struggle and, deriving from this, of the necessary strategy and tactics of the working class movement—that gave birth to Communism; eventually to organised Communist Parties, accepting the Marxist outlook as a guide to action, with a corresponding form of organisation which cements theory and practice in the hard and constant struggle to spread scientific socialist thinking and make concrete advances along the road to socialism.

The Communist Party uses Marxism as a guide to action from the standpoint of those in the forefront of the class struggle. It is the application of

Marxism to practice in this way that is the essential guarantee both of the development of the working class movement and of Marxism itself.

"Marxism", as Cornforth has said (in the article already referred to), "means above all confidence in our struggle and in the future of humanity—confidence based on science, on casting off illusions, on the fight against reactionary ideologies, on scientific socialism. The liberating force of Marxist philosophy lies in the fact that it bestows and develops this confidence, and that armed with Marxism the people's movement is invincible."

The people's movement is armed with Marxism in this sense, not by philosophers who enunciate guiding principles from above the battle, but in the thick of the struggle by the Communist Party. To extend active and collective participation in the class struggle in this way is the key both to creative Marxism and human progress.

Discussion on Marxism and the British Labour Movement

The Revival of British Socialism

Desmond Greaves

WE should feel some community with the men of the eighteen-eighties. What happened then is being enacted today on a vaster canvas and with an inevitably different outcome. The British Empire is being demolished before our eyes, and the ideas it gave rise to cannot long survive. A younger generation, which shows even if somewhat anarchically its impatience with empiricism, hardheaded practicalism and the parochialism of the metropolis, is already on the way up. Traditional British "contempt for theory" may in the next decade turn into its opposite, and they will be hard days for the educational cranks who think it is possible to learn without thinking and studying.

Theory of some sort is, of course, as inescapable as the famous Hound of Heaven. Your "sound practical man" may not realise it, but his contempt for socialist theory merely denotes imprisonment within capitalist theory, too scrappy to be recognised as such. Without theory a joiner cannot drive

a nail into a coffin, or a musician blow a flea out of a trumpet. But so much of the past lives in the minds of this oldest working class that the British would almost need to become the most theoretical nation on earth, in order to get the outworn lumber away.

For these reasons pay tribute to the initiative of Lionel Munby. His enquiry is valuable and important. To enter the lists in criticism is to pay him the compliment of imitation. A clear estimation of the role of scientific socialist ideas in the second great crisis of British capitalism is a necessary part of the preparation for the supreme class battles which many of us believe will fall in the nineteen-sixties.

Such an estimation cannot be arrived at hastily. Betty Grant rightly demands the study of primary sources and not books "about" things. Through *Our History* she has made much useful matter available. Fact, date and circumstance are indispensable and cannot be taken for granted. But

attempts at constructing an orderly picture, even with inadequate data, are also useful, provided nobody mistakes the scaffolding for the building. The question of how to approach the assembled material is inseparable from the choice of what material to assemble. From biology to astrophysics (but most of all in history) judgment of data proceeds alongside its accumulation. Comrade Munby's essay gives practical expression to this principle.

To Marx and Engels thinking was but a part of action. Theory and practice only became distinct (historically) in so far as they represented a social division of labour. Despite the special laws under which theory enjoyed individual development, its great importance, and the vital influence it exerted on the social process as a whole, its ultimate dependence remained. By the same token the head is dependent on the body. The way man lives determines how he thinks. The fundamental law of dependence was indeed a *condition* of the influence of theory. It reasserted itself spectacularly in major revolutions when the entire superstructure of law, philosophy etc. was "more or less rapidly transformed".

Thinking and Action

The self-consciousness of a class (as distinct from the class-consciousness of an individual member of a class) is thus unattainable except through action. While the British working class fought the bourgeoisie there was socialism. When it acted with the bourgeoisie there was no socialism. When it was no longer possible to act with the bourgeoisie the British workers would no longer accept its thought, struggled against it, and there was socialism again.

Munby is therefore quite right to start with the "revival of socialism" in the eighties, and to cast a glance backwards over the "long sleep" of the British proletariat since 1848. But whether it is so sound to accept as inevitable the development through the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) and the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.); and to counterpose these organisations in a kind of historical post-mortem, is dubious. A current cannot be known through its eddies. The estimation of the Labour movement cannot proceed from the analysis of its divisions. Primary must precede secondary and it is necessary to follow the main factor of growth through its entire development. To extend the parallel from physics, the study of turbulence is a part of the study of flow, and not vice versa.

Perhaps therefore he invited Betty Grant's highly unhistorical defence of the S.D.F. as "our very own", which incidentally reduces the Communist Party of today to the level of a sect. We must not end like the two farmers who came to blows over

whether the oak or the bog-myrtle was the finest tree. The development of class-consciousness has not in fact proceeded down one channel only. Therefore retrospect cannot block any of them up.

Views of Marx and Engels

A serious lack in our literature is a detailed study of Marx's and Engels's practical work in the British movement. But it is clear from what has been published that Engels expected a revival of socialism as a result of the destruction of Britain's industrial monopoly. But he did not expect a mass Marxist party to spring fully clothed from the debris. He seems to have envisaged a movement comparable to Chartism in extent, and to German Social Democracy in political development. The first stage would be the growth of a "Workingman's Party" separate from the Liberal and Conservative parties. The aims of this party would be democratic (i.e. leading to the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat) and the duty of the Communists within it would be to enable the workers to raise themselves to the level of Marxist understanding in the course of their struggles. It must not therefore be confined to "Marxists".

The decline and subsequent revival of the British working class movement would thus be a magnified example of the process described in the *Manifesto*:

"The organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier."

Engels rested his hopes on the movement of the masses. The impetus was to come from the masses. Their needs were to be translated into consciousness by the Communists, themselves part of the movement, and this consciousness was in turn to be imparted to the masses so as to raise them progressively to the level of higher tasks.

But when Britain's industrial monopoly fell, the unexpected, though perfectly understandable, happened. The ideological reflex preceded the political. A section of the radical intelligentsia whose education gave them access to European experience grasped the relevance of Marx's theory to Britain's new situation more quickly than the workers who bore the economic brunt of it. But their class position and bourgeois-radical background clouded their understanding. Hence their leader, Hyndman, both plagiarised and distorted Marx. Both plagiarism and distortion were an accommodation to radical prejudices. Those parts of *England for All* that are not popularised extracts from chapters of *Capital* reek with complacency and chauvinism which glowers unashamedly even through the most purple passages on Ireland and India.

The S.D.F.

The words "sectarianism" and "opportunism" will not serve us well if they are regarded as polar opposites. Hyndman's sectarianism (elevation of the point of difference) was a part of his opportunism (accommodation to radicalism). He had accomplished an intellectuals' palace-revolution, and slowly recognised his dependence on the power in the streets. Sectarianism is a form of opportunism, not its antithesis. It would have been one thing for Marx and Engels to hail with pleasurable surprise a rebirth of socialism in the form of a group of young disciples, anxious to learn and propagate their teachings. It was another to hail its rebirth as revisionism, not the proclaimed revisionism of Bernstein but a fair prototype. Hence the gravamen of Engels's charge against the S.D.F. (years afterwards when Hyndman's influence was less) that it was "pursuing the exact opposite of the policy recommended in the *Manifesto*". Its formula for socialist activity was Party—masses—Party, instead of masses—Party—masses.

The reasons given for the secession of the Socialist League do not include Engels's motives for encouraging the break. Hyndman's individualism was objected to as a barrier to a transition to the Marxist position. Engels quickly recognised the S.D.F. as a product of the crisis, though not the one he relied on. For a time he had hopes of Bax. But the Socialist League proved only capable of opposing the sectarianism of the S.D.F. with a sectarianism of its own. To point to the participation of both organisations in the mass struggles which took place does not affect this judgment. The question is whether such participation "brought to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat" and "everywhere represented the interests of the movement as a whole".

It was when the long-delayed response of the masses to the changed conditions took place (roughly from 1889)—that is, when the peculiar circumstances of the earlier years of the crisis had passed away—that the time of test and opportunity came. Already the elements of the imperialist solution had appeared, and along with them the easily generated ideas of Fabianism. It is a historical fact, not belied by the tremendous energy of S.D.F. and Socialist League members and branches (the two bodies were reunited in Scotland), that neither they nor the Fabians could lead or accommodate the great upsurge of the masses. Read through the local newspapers in any obscure town you please and compare 1887 with 1890 when section after section of the unskilled workers clamoured for organisation, and strikes were on a scale not equalled till 1911-13. Workers flocked into the S.D.F. and out again. Outside its doors were thousands who shared the new mood but could

not understand its shibboleths. The mass movement broke through the restrictions imposed by existing organisations, and an entirely new organisation, the I.L.P., was founded in the north and rapidly spread till it exceeded the combined strength of the S.D.F. and the Fabians.

The I.L.P. was established under conditions of mass activity on a gigantic scale, and for a time more exactly corresponded to the general needs of the situation—the organisation of the proletariat as a class. But what Engels hoped for was not that it should supplant and destroy the S.D.F. or the Fabians but that the masses, *through its agency*, should *compel* the unification of all three bodies into one and thus close the epoch of sects and sectarianism.

Effects of Imperialism

This desirable end was not achieved, because the development of imperialism was creating the basis for a period of Liberal-Labour (ideologically Fabian) dominion of the working class movement, with results still apparent today. But after the 1889-94 struggles the workers did not go into another sleep. The action of the masses continually strove to impose unity (for fear any reader imagines I insert the word "consciously" let me remark that it is *in the nature of* the masses to impose unity to the degree that they are brought into action) and the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. constantly improved each other. The S.D.F. of the turn of the century was not that of 1884. Some of its radical intellectuals had (to use Engels's phrase) fermented themselves clear. Fresh blood had been infused by the mass movement. But elements of a new revisionism had grafted themselves on to the old; sectarianism remained while it took new forms. The majority of the Marxists were in the S.D.F., though some were in the I.L.P. In conditions of developing imperialism both organisations developed an internal stratification between leaders and rank and file. The struggle against opportunism in the S.D.F. was not won until the upsurge against the imperialist war in 1916, and there were many intervening vicissitudes. The I.L.P. membership never fell completely under the control of reformism, but instead of the amalgamations which seemed possible in 1893 and 1902, there were a series of defections which finally transferred all its good elements into the Communist Party. This was only possible because of the defeat of opportunism within the S.D.F. (or more precisely its lineal successor the B.S.P. which had already attracted many from the I.L.P.) in 1916.

In every upsurge of the mass struggle the issue of unity has been raised once more. It is usual to blame the progress of imperialist ideology for the outcome which has dominated the period now closing. In a

sense (and only in a sense) the masses had their way. The result was a huge imposing Labour Party dominated by Fabian ideas. But might the masses not have imposed unity in some superior form but for the self-denial of the Marxists in keeping too far away from them? Most Marxists today would admit the two factors. The British Labour movement was badly bitten by Fabianism, but it need scarcely have been *so* badly bitten.

It remains to ask how far these considerations apply to the "Crisis of Empire" which dominates our days. Imperialist ideas are now meeting their practical refutation. The collapse of empire is being translated into a Tory offensive, and any new period of mass action by the British working class will take place under most advanced conditions, where it is nationally at the pinnacle of its organisational strength, and in the most favourable international situation so far known. The prospects for sweeping away bans and proscriptions and at last achieving the "Organisation of the workers as a class"—one political party increasingly led and guided by the Communists—may strikingly improve in the near future. In so far as we see the masses as the factor of unity, we will be enabled to "represent the interests of the whole" and thereby progressively imbue the majority with the necessary socialist consciousness.

Unity of Marxism and the Mass Movement

In his contribution Frank Jackson refers to the two neo-Lassalleian sects, the S.P.G.B. and the S.L.P. These represented a form of revisionism which (like anarchism) had a momentary appeal. They are of purely historical interest today except in so far as detached items from their ideological stock-in-trade form part of the junk-pile of

"Trotskyism". But at one time the ideas they imported from Germany and America (ideas then largely discarded in Germany but flourishing in America) held wide currency though their following was very restricted. It would be interesting on some occasion to trace how Lassalleianism was rescued from extinction by De Leon, passed off as a left-wing antidote to reformism by his admirers, and thus distributed round the English-speaking world. Most quack arguments fired today are drawn from its armoury of confusion. But apart from 1911-1914 this is largely an American question, and absorption of the S.L.P. in the Communist Party finished its history. The S.P.G.B. has survived as a petit-bourgeois sect by resolutely declining any action which would test its views in practice, and has had as little influence, or is likely to have, as the Anti-vivisection League. Therefore I doubt whether it is possible to regard these parties as embodying the "real split" in the working class, even at their inception.

The over-all growth has been of unity. But it has proceeded through divisions. The final unification still awaits achievement. It is no longer a unification of sects. It is the unification of Marxism, physically embodied in a Communist Party, with the working class masses now largely organised in the Labour, trade union and Co-operative movements. This will be as complex as the process which preceded it, and will be the work of years. But like the founders of communism we can now discern the conditions for success maturing every day. Unlike them we require less strength of character to act upon our convictions. It is a matter of significance that *The British Road to Socialism* has approached nearer to Engels's views on the development of the movement in Britain than any preceding manifesto of British Marxists.

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Marxism and the Moral Law

George Burgher

IN the February issue of *Marxism Today*, Dr. Lewis has succeeded in dealing with a very complicated subject in the compass of one short article. Where such compression has been achieved without sacrificing his usual lucidity it would be wrong to cavil at individual turns of phrase. However, several points he raises seem worth further consideration.

He suggests at the beginning of his analysis of ethical imperatives that we should draw "a distinction between what is good, valuable, desirable and what is morally right"; and then, somewhat illogically, goes on to argue that the first kind of obligation a man has is a duty to himself. He ought to fight for those goods to which he has a right. Since men have in any case so natural a propensity to satisfy their own desires, ethical terms can only be introduced into such a context at the cost of distorting their usual meaning. Then, at a subsequent stage of his argument, Dr. Lewis is faced with the problem of raising on this subjective base of human wants an objective structure of moral responsibility.

The Good and the Right

The difficulty could have been obviated by recognising from the start not the distinction between what is good and what is right but the connection. In calling upon auxiliary disciplines like psychology and anthropology to help elucidate questions of moral philosophy no Marxist can afford to overlook the assistance of economics itself—particularly since such concepts as "value" and "goods" are common to both studies. "There can be," as Dr. Lewis says, "no other basis for human activity and social organisation than the satisfaction of human needs." What is good is simply whatever is produced by common industry to meet certain desires; and these goods change as society develops and new satisfactions become possible. But from the moment men organise themselves to make anything at all they are involved in relations of production and it is here that duties and rights arise. The obligations they acknowledge also change from one stage of economic development to another, just as the productive relations themselves vary. Now these relations of

production refer primarily to questions of distribution and the whole purpose of production is, of course, consumption; but production, distribution and consumption are all merely different aspects of one and the same process. Therefore these two concepts of good and right must also be seen as simply reflecting two sides of the same human activity which includes both desiring and, because those desires can only be realised through social co-operation, responsibilities to others.

This dialectical relationship is also to be seen in Marx's analysis of the commodity which is the form goods take in all more or less advanced societies. It has to be recognised as at once a useful thing and also as a value—that is, as an embodiment of human labour. If our subjective judgments are concerned with the former aspect, the perfectly objective labour theory of value refers to the latter; and so here, again, we get the same polarisation between the good, as satisfaction of demands, and the right, as respect for the efforts of others in achieving their satisfaction as well. They represent a distinction within a social whole and their intimate connection is brought out by our assumption that price and value ought to equal each other. Surely this is one way of apprehending that dialectical interplay of subjective and objective which is suggested in the article as a resolution of the differences between Selsam and Loeser.

Class Morality

Near the end of his discussion Dr. Lewis says: ". . . Marxists are well aware that such general principles as the sacredness of human life, truthfulness, pity are of enormous importance; if one *has* to set them partially and temporarily aside there will be a real diminution of the good secured . . ." and he adds: "if the course he (the Marxist) adopts is *not* followed because of fidelity to these moral laws, then these moral laws themselves will be violated to a greater degree than is required by the class struggle. . . ." Now this is a very romantic notion of the Marxist jeopardising his own soul to save others, acting against his true beliefs in the name of those very beliefs themselves; but will it really do? These "general principles" and "moral laws" over and above the class struggle have a

bourgeois look about them in spite of the criticism the author has just been levelling at such absolute standards. One can only suppose that what he actually meant to point out was that ideal sentiments may appear rather different once they have been translated into an active effort to change the world we live in.

To the charge that Marxism is a class morality the simple answer is that no morality in a class-riven society can be otherwise. The interesting problem is why the more narrowly based ethics of the bourgeoisie should issue forth in the widest of generalisations and claims to universal validity. To understand this characteristic it is only necessary to recall the dialectic of knowledge with its respective phases of sense-perception, concept-forming and active application of those concepts to the real world. The mechanical reaction of stimulus and response at the lowest stage corresponds roughly with an unconscious primitive morality. At the next stage concepts formed by the mind in operating on its environment become sufficiently detached for abstract thought which, as Lenin pointed out, creates at once the conditions of human knowledge and the possibility of idealism. That possibility becomes a reality in the historical situation of a division between intellectual and manual labour. The rupture between theory and practice leads to the complete cutting off of concepts from their real origins to assume an arbitrary independence which makes it superficially plausible to deduce nature from the idea instead of the other way about. Once this perversion has occurred it serves so obvious a class interest in postulating as transcendent and eternal the values of a dominant section of society that every effort is made to arrest development at this particular moment. It is from the nature of these freely floating concepts separated from all reality that idealistic ethics draws its notion of a limitless and meaningless individual freedom. Only at the third stage of re-application

to the material world of the abstract ideas derived from it can this whole fantastic, topsy-turvy ideology be righted and set on a proper foundation again.

Ideas in Theory and Practice

In his recent book, *Marxism and the Open Mind*, Dr. Lewis is very critical of fellow Marxists for condemning idealists as reactionary whatever their historical context. Plato is instanced as one example of this deplorable tendency. And yet Plato, though he certainly sharpened the conceptual tools of speculation and made considerable contributions to philosophical thought, provides a classic case of the way abstract ideas can be used to oppose social progress. Reaction is a political term and it can be applied to many who may in this respect or that have advanced some particular branch of learning; it must be applied to all idealists because idealism by its very nature cheats us with the substitution of shadow for substance and, by denying the need or possibility of real change, is always on the side of the Establishment. "The conflict between idealism and materialism, arising as it does from the very process of human knowledge and to that extent universal, thus appears throughout the course of history with different contents determined by the specific social formation in which it occurs." (Desanti, J.-T., *Introduction à l'Histoire de la Philosophie*)

It is not a question, then, of Marxists having to sacrifice certain ideals in achieving their ends. It is simply that ideals in theory, ideals at the stage of mere utopian projection, and ideals in practice, ideals involved in a real struggle, may not always be immediately identifiable. This can be an important consideration for intellectuals of the Left in a relatively static situation. They can so easily become obsessed with what looked to them like defections from socialist morality in those places where the fight to establish socialism is actually in progress.

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